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26 November 2007

Mrs Marion Davis  
Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families  
Warwickshire County Council  
Saltisford Office Park  
Ansell Way  
Warwick  
CV34 4UL

Dear Mrs Davis

## **2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

### **Overall effectiveness of children's services**

**Grade 3**

Warwickshire County Council consistently delivers services for children and young people at a good level. The work of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board is underpinned by strong leadership, clear direction and excellent partnership working. Outcomes for children and young people have improved significantly in many respects. Inequalities between different groups of young people and areas of the county have been identified and effective strategies have begun to close these gaps.

### **Being healthy**

**Grade 3**

#### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes in this aspect is good. Health priorities are well informed through multi-agency networks, which also ensure a wide

distribution of information and advice regarding health initiatives. The need to further reduce inequality between localities is well recognised and actions are already having a positive impact.

The proportion of mothers initiating breast-feeding has increased, particularly in North Warwickshire, where children's centres promote breast-feeding well through peer mentoring and breast-feeding cafes. Across the county, rates are now in line with the national average. Work with pregnant mothers on the importance of healthy lifestyles has helped to reduce the proportion of expectant mothers who smoke during pregnancy. In North Warwickshire the numbers smoking in pregnancy have dropped significantly and across the area it is better than the national average and similar authorities. The infant mortality rate has increased in four of the five local areas and is higher than the national average in three areas. The good support to mothers in more deprived areas is beginning to have an impact on reducing this. The number of conceptions amongst 15-17 year olds remains below similar authorities and the national average but varies across the county. The teenage pregnancy strategy is targeting resources appropriately. Connexions and the Youth Service contribute positively to implementing the very good sexual health policy.

Increasing the number of schools achieving healthy schools status was an area for improvement in the APA 2006. Progress in this area continues to be slow. Both the number of schools participating in the healthy schools programme and the number achieving healthy schools status are considerably lower than the national average. An alcohol strategy has been developed, underpinned by implementation plans, to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the range of alcohol services offered to children, young people and their families. Young people involved in offending have good access to assessment and treatment for substance misuse problems.

A comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has been developed. However, the provision of CAMHS is not consistent across the county and there are delays in children and young people accessing services. The joint commissioner is taking steps to address this. Schools responding to the school survey rated the effectiveness of local services in meeting the mental health needs of young people as below satisfactory. Access to assessment and treatment of mental health difficulties for young people involved with offending is good and better than similar authorities.

The number of annual health assessments of looked after children and young people is very good and they have good access to a dedicated mental health service. Foster carers are well supported with health issues through helpful training and resources packs. The provision of services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The integrated disability service is very well planned and delivered and is well informed by the views of parents. Evaluation of the service has shown a high level of satisfaction from users.

## Areas for development

- Increase the number of schools participating in the healthy schools programme and achieving healthy schools status to meet the national target.
- Ensure CAMHS provision is consistent and provides equitable access across the county.

## Staying safe

Grade 3

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes in this aspect is good. The number of children under 16 killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents has reduced significantly and progress is better than the national target. School travel advisers promote safe and healthy travel to schools. However, only 41% of schools have travel plans. The good range of activities to tackle bullying includes good advice for children, parents and professionals as well as a range of useful tools on the council's website.

The council is taking a strong lead, through the enhanced support network, in bringing together services contributing to the preventative agenda and to improve understanding of this. Staff across all agencies have been involved in the development and delivery of training on the common assessment framework and implementation has begun. However, preventative and early intervention work have yet to impact significantly on referrals to children's social care services. The number of referrals has reduced but remains significantly higher than similar authorities, with a very high proportion (42%) being repeat referrals. While the number of referrals leading to initial assessments is about average the number of core assessments undertaken is well below similar authorities. The proportion of initial and core assessments completed within expected timescales is excellent and well above the national average and similar authorities. More children in Warwickshire have a child protection plan than in similar authorities. All child protection cases are allocated to qualified social workers and child protection plans are successful in reducing risk with low re-registration rates. However, the proportion of child protection cases reviewed during the year has reduced to 95% which is below the national average and only adequate performance. Good work has been done to raise awareness of private fostering through a public information leaflet and press releases.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is well established with a wide range of representatives and an agreed work plan. It is supported by appropriate sub-committees. There is good evidence of follow-up on actions arising from serious case reviews. The good range of initiatives to promote safeguarding includes DVDs for schools on keeping children safe from dangers associated with the internet. Proactive

steps have been taken to improve safe recruiting practices through an audit of recruitment in schools and guidance and workshops for schools on safe recruiting. Schools surveyed report that they value the good training, advice and guidance received on child protection.

The local authority has been successful in reducing the proportion of looked after children in residential care to well below that found in similar authorities and the national average. Most looked after children live in safe and stable families with foster carers or adopters and are allocated to qualified social workers. The percentage of looked after reviews completed within expected timescales has improved but, at 72%, remains well below similar authorities and the national average. Careful attention is paid to ensure that the cultural needs of looked after children from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are met. Adoption performance has improved significantly and is now good. Timescales for placing children with adopters is good and better than similar authorities. The number of looked after children adopted is very good. Preparation, assessment and approval of adoptive families are thorough and include robust safeguarding checks.

A well-resourced and well-coordinated short breaks scheme is in place for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The integrated disability service is looking at ways of extending the range of support further and ensuring better equity of provision in response to parents' wishes. Transition planning is good. Virtually all children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 14+ have a transition plan to support their move from children's services to adult services.

### **Areas for development**

- Reduce the number of referrals and repeat referrals to children's social care.
- Improve the timeliness of looked after children and young people's reviews.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Standards of attainment have continued to improve and are above those found nationally and in similar authorities. The progress made by pupils throughout Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 is similar to the progress made by pupils nationally. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been consistently above national averages and similar authorities from 2003 to 2006. At the end of Key Stage 2 standards have risen in line with national averages and more rapidly than similar authorities. The local authority's targeted support to raise standards in boys' writing

has been successful in increasing attainment more rapidly than has happened nationally. Similarly, Primary National Strategy interventions have been well used. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has increased at a greater rate than nationally.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 show a rising trend and remain above national averages. Attainment in mathematics in Key Stage 3 has improved more quickly than other subjects since 2004, exceeding the local authority target. GCSE results are improving in line with national averages and similar authorities. All secondary schools achieved the 25% floor target at the end of Key Stage 4 for 2006.

The local authority provides good support for schools in Ofsted categories of concern. However, the local authority acknowledges that there are still too many primary schools in special measures or with a notice to improve and that they have not been sufficiently rigorous in the past at addressing weak leadership. Although the number of primary schools requiring special measures has reduced, the number of primary schools being given a notice to improve has increased. An intervention strategy has been agreed and robust procedures have been put in place to address this issue.

The local authority's focused work has been very successful in improving outcomes for looked after children and young people. Their attainment has improved year on year and exceeds that of looked after children nationally and in similar authorities. Attendance levels for looked after children are now above those found nationally or in similar authorities. The local authority has identified individual pupils at risk of underachievement, including the small number of Black Caribbean pupils, and put in place programmes to support them. As a result, these pupils are progressing at a similar rate to the national average.

Good progress has been made in raising the achievement of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Schools responding to the school survey rate the effectiveness of local authority intervention and support for these pupils highly and inspection findings indicate that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make better progress than their peers.

Children are getting a good start to their education. More early years settings were judged outstanding than was the case nationally and none was judged unsatisfactory. The Foundation Stage Profile outcomes indicate that attainment is just above the national average and that the inequality gap, which shows the difference between the lowest performing children and the average, is smaller than the national average.

Children and young people's attitudes and behaviour in school are mostly good or better. The local authority has implemented a behaviour strategy and policy for managed moves and fair access in order to reduce exclusions and improve provision for those pupils who have been excluded from schools. This is already having a positive effect with the proportion of pupils excluded falling since 2005 to a level in

line with similar authorities. However, the proportion of permanently excluded pupils provided with 20 or more hours of alternative tuition remains too low.

School attendance is broadly in line with national averages and similar authorities. However, the local authority missed its attendance target by 0.16% and those schools responding to the school survey placed the effectiveness of local authority support for promoting attendance in the bottom quartile nationally.

The local authority takes good account of the needs and wishes of children and young people in its planning for provision of recreational activities and study support. Funding has been used well and the local authority has received a 'highly commended' award from the Government Office in recognition of its use of Youth Opportunity Fund money. Good attention has been paid to ensuring equality of access to young people in rural areas and targeted 'hot spots'.

### **Areas for development**

- Reduce the number of schools in Ofsted categories of concern.
- Reduce the number of pupils permanently excluded from school and ensure that those who are excluded receive full-time alternative tuition.
- Take a more proactive approach to raising attendance in schools.

## **Making a positive contribution**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes in this area is good. The views of children and young people are well highlighted and incorporated in the children and young people's plan (CYPP). The Warwickshire Award for Involvement promotes and encourages participation. Increased numbers of young people across all districts were involved in democracy week. The schools survey indicated significant improvement in providing opportunities for children and young people to make their voices heard on decisions which affect them. Young people are very well involved in making decisions on which projects are supported by the Youth Opportunity Fund. There is good involvement of young people in recruiting for posts across the council.

Almost all schools have counselling services in place, which independent evaluation has shown to be valued by children and young people. Good project work in schools builds children and young people's self protection skills and resilience. The youth service continues to reach comparatively high numbers of young people. An effective parenting strategy is well implemented and ensures that the wide range of parenting support is well co-ordinated and gaps in parenting support are identified and filled.

Very good multi-agency working through the 'Positive about Young People' project has been successful in reducing anti-social behaviour of 8-13 year olds and has

significantly reduced the numbers of children under 13 becoming involved in offending. However, this project has not yet been extended to 14-17 year olds. Re-offending by young people (40%) is significantly less than similar authorities (51.6%) and the national average (49.7%). Although the overall number of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time increased in 2006, it is still well below similar authorities.

Inspection of fostering services showed that very good efforts are made to find out the views of looked after children and young people and this is underpinned by a corporate parenting strategy. The number of looked after young people involved with offending has risen. The number of looked after children and young people participating in their reviews has improved and is good. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported to participate in their reviews. A county wide forum for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps to ensure their voices are heard and their views sought when services are changing and developing.

### **Area for development**

- Reduce the number of looked after young people involved with offending.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The strong partnership between the local authority and its schools and colleges, the Learning and Skills Council, and Connexions is effective in planning a good range of vocational programmes for 14-19 year olds. Success rates in modern apprenticeships have increased significantly, in line with statistical neighbours and the national average. The proportion of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by age 19 is rising at a faster rate than in similar authorities and national averages. Attainment post-16 is above the national average and that found in similar authorities.

Good systems are in place to ensure that young people are provided with comprehensive and reliable information about their future training or employment options. Both the school survey and the local authority's own survey indicate that young people are happy with the information they receive.

Despite a recent increase, the proportion of 16-18 year olds not engaged in education, employment or training is in line with similar authorities and below the national average. The proportion of 19 year olds not engaged in education, employment or training is well below similar authorities and the national average. Work to engage young offenders in education, training or employment is already showing signs of success. The proportion of these young people engaged in

education, employment or training improved from 2005 to 2006 and there are indications that significant further improvement is likely over the coming year. However, the proportion of teenage mothers who are engaged in education, training or employment is low compared to similar authorities and the national average.

The local authority has managed the provision of child care well, ensuring that a wide range of good quality provision is available. The phase 1 target for Children's Centres has been exceeded and good progress is being made on phase 2. Monitoring of provision is rigorous and appropriate actions are put in place to address the few shortage areas; for example, the directing of new providers to specific geographical areas.

The local authority has invested considerably in strategies to address child poverty. For example, the targeted work with single parents and families from Black and minority ethnic communities, including Sikh and Portuguese families, has improved their knowledge of entitlements and increased take-up of appropriate benefits.

Very good provision has been made for young people who are looked after. Virtually all of them have pathway plans and a personal advisor. As a result, the proportion of young people who were looked after at age 17 and were engaged in education, training or employment at age 19 is good. The proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation has risen steadily and is greater than similar authorities and the national average.

### **Area for development**

- Reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training.

## **Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services**

**Grade 4**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The council's management of its services for children and young people and its capacity to improve are outstanding. Leadership is strong and very effective use is made of partnership working to improve the outcomes for young people. Partnership working between the council and health partners, in particular, is excellent and has been strengthened by the joint appointment of a Director for Public Health and a joint commissioner.

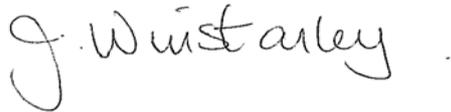
The council sets itself high targets and has demonstrated very good progress in improving outcomes for children and young people. For example, the development of the integrated disability service is a significant development in improving support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families. Educational achievement of looked after children has improved year on year and exceeds that of looked after children nationally and in similar authorities. The

Positive about Young People project has been highly successful in reducing numbers of young people aged 11-13 involved in offending. The local authority has been very successful in improving adoption performance.

The CYPP is based on a thorough needs analysis taking into account the views of children and young people. Clear and appropriate priorities to improve outcomes are identified. The plan is rigorously monitored and reported on through regular and robust activities demonstrating very good performance management.

The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager  
Local Services Inspection