

07 December 2007

Mr Paul Robinson  
Director of Education  
London Borough of Wandsworth  
The Town Hall  
Wandsworth High Street  
London  
SW18 2PU

Dear Mr Robinson

## **2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) for your local authority, some aspects of which were conducted at the same time as the analysis stage of the joint area review (JAR). The 2006 APA informed the scoping of the JAR at the planning stage and the initial findings of the 2007 APA were taken into account by the review team at the end of the analysis stage. The outcomes of the JAR were then considered alongside a review of recent data in arriving at the final APA judgements for 2007. As a result, many of the areas for development highlighted in this letter align with the recommendations in the JAR report and should be similarly aligned in any future action plan produced by the council and its partners. The judgements in the letter also draw on your assessment of progress or review of the Children and Young People's Plan where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted and other inspectorates. We are grateful for the information you provided to support this and for the time given by you and your colleagues to the assessment process.

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

**Grade 4**

The council consistently delivers excellent services for children and young people. Its contribution is at least good and mostly outstanding in meeting *Every child matters* objectives. Services are having a strong impact on improving life opportunities and narrowing the gap between the achievement and well-being of the most vulnerable and others. Consultation is embedded in practice with good levels of participation helping to maintain the pace of improvement across services.

## Being healthy

Grade 4

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution the council makes towards improving the health of children and young people is excellent. Healthy lifestyles are promoted; there is an appropriate emphasis on prevention and good involvement of young people. Well co-ordinated, multi-disciplinary work in children's centres is contributing to improving outcomes. The appointment of an officer to lead the healthy schools and personal, social and health programmes is accelerating progress with converting level three accredited schools to the new Healthy Schools Standard. However, of the 38 schools receiving support none, as yet, has met the new criteria. Healthy eating is promoted in schools and there has been an improvement in the content of school meals.

Whilst performance remains below the national average, the council is sustaining good levels of reduction in teenage pregnancy rates. A range of strategies is being used to tackle this problem and the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases in under 16 year olds. These include good provision of sexual health clinics, peers contributing to the development of a safer sex campaign and information on sexual health being integrated into the curriculum. Learning mentors are in place to support pregnant teenagers and young people needing advice and support concerning sexual health matters.

Take-up for the immunisation of children under the ages of two and five is below that of neighbours. The oral health of children in this age group is poor. The council is aware of these issues. There is a local area agreement to improve immunisation rates through a health promotion campaign and dental disease in the under fives is also being tackled.

Action is taken to promote the mental health of children and young people. Integrated provision is increasing access to services at an earlier stage. There has also been increased funding to provide psychological services for looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children's centres benefit from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provision.

The proportion of under 18 year olds receiving treatment for substance misuse from the Drug Action team is lower than the London average, however a higher proportion of these children appropriately receive treatment within children's specialist services.

The council and its partner agencies work in close collaboration to promote the health of looked after children. Consequently, there is a high take-up, above that of similar authorities and national levels, for annual health checks, dental checks and immunisations. Looked after children are provided with a very good range of information about healthy living, sexual health and drugs.

Multi-agency partnerships effectively promote the health of young children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Primary aged children with complex needs

have regular, highly effective nutritional, dental and visual checks. Good support is provided by the schools' nursing service for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Strong transitional arrangements are in place to ensure continuity of health care from children's to adult services.

There is a local agreement between the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the council to reduce obesity in children. 'MEND', a programme focusing on exercise, nutrition and positive behaviour, is targeted at children between the ages of seven and 10. A sports instructor delivers the programme over a 10 week period and so far 210 children have been involved.

### **Area for development**

- Work with partners to increase the take-up for immunisation and improve the oral health of children under the age of five.

## **Staying safe**

**Grade 4**

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

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is excellent. The children's specialist services work well together. Strong leadership and good involvement of elected members ensures agencies collaborate effectively to safeguard children in accordance with government requirements. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) includes membership from the voluntary sector as does the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). The board is appropriately constituted with relevant subgroups and realistic priorities are identified for its work. Serious case reviews are undertaken in a timely manner and learning appropriately disseminated.

Very good preventative services are in place to support families, particularly with Sure Start and children's centres. The percentage of core and initial assessments completed is better than similar authorities. There has been a reduction in the looked after population in the last year. All looked after children and those on the child protection register have an allocated social worker. Their education is well supported by a dedicated team which ensures that personal education plans are in place. Health assessments are also completed in a timely way and there is good access to psychological support. Excellent mechanisms are in place for consultation with looked after children and their reviews are held on time with most children attending. Where they do not wish to attend independent reviewing officers ascertain their wishes prior to the review. Very good arrangements are in place for advocacy.

Both child protection re-referrals and re-registrations are low, comparing favourably with similar authorities and national averages. The number of child protection conferences held within timescales is also above that found nationally. Data on the convening of initial child protection conferences within 15 days of investigation indicated there were delays. However, close monitoring has improved this indicator

and 79% are now held within required timescales; a higher number than similar authorities.

Looked after young people aged 15 plus have pathway plans and the independent living service provides excellent support to care leavers; the percentage of young people in education, training and employment in 2006–7 was very good at 84%. The council has high aspirations for its young people and some progress to university each year. Mediation strategies have been developed by the youth offending team in conjunction with residential staff in order to reduce the risk of looked after children re-offending.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

**Grade 3**

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

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good overall with outstanding features. Parents and carers are very well supported in helping their children to enjoy learning. Children's centres form the basis for integrated working with multi-agency teams providing a wide range of outreach and support activities for children and their families.

Children and young people make good progress at all stages of their compulsory education. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 continues to improve. In 2006, 61% of young people achieved five or more A\*-C grades, a higher percentage than similar authorities and just above the national average. The council reports improvement has been sustained in 2007. The proportion of young people including English and mathematics amongst the five higher grades rose slightly to 44% in 2006 to come broadly in line with neighbours and the national average.

In 2006, children's attainment in the Foundation Stage was below the national average in 13 of the 14 prescribed areas, partly reflecting the low starting points of many children. Performance in Key Stages 1 to 3 in 2006 was broadly in line with neighbours. In Key Stage 1 standards fell in all subjects at all levels and were below the national average. In Key Stage 2 standards were broadly average with a rise in mathematics and science but a fall in English. This pattern was mirrored in Key Stage 3 but with standards in science below the national average. There is a strong commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable groups. Some notable successes were achieved in 2006 in improving outcomes for Black and minority ethnic groups with more work to do. The attainment and attendance of looked after children have improved significantly. The reorganisation and improvement of provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well underway. Whilst it is too soon to see the impact of new arrangements, children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities continue to achieve well. The council recognises the need to continue to improve outcomes for boys and some Black and minority ethnic groups.

There is very good leadership of school improvement with an appropriate balance of support and challenge for schools. Systems for identifying and tackling

underachievement are robust. The authority has been effective in strengthening the use of challenging targets to raise achievement. There are no schools in Ofsted's categories of concern. The one primary school judged to have serious weaknesses has improved and been removed from this category. All secondary schools are above the 30% five higher-grade GCSE passes floor target. In 2006 a number of primary schools were at or below floor targets. Carefully planned and targeted work is securing a reduction in these numbers, particularly in mathematics where the number of schools has fallen from 14 to nine. Of the 21 school settings inspected in 2006/07 the overall effectiveness of the majority was good or better with six schools judged to be satisfactory.

Primary attendance has been an area for improvement. Whilst attendance overall was broadly in line with national averages, in 2006 it dipped in both phases compared to 2005. With the creation of the new Children's Services Department, actions to improve attendance now sit within the overarching school improvement strategy in recognition of the close links between attendance and achievement. A cross-service approach is focusing intensively on schools with high absence and a high number of persistent absentees. The authority reports a discernible impact with attendance in primary schools rising. Tackling persistent absentees remains a challenge.

Children and young people enjoy school and their behaviour is mostly good or better. This is reflected in a notable reduction in fixed term exclusions, particularly in secondary and special schools. In 2006, permanent exclusions in secondary schools were above the national average although the prevailing trend over time is downwards in both primary and secondary schools.

The number of exclusions of children and young people from Black and minority ethnic groups is a concern and an area for improvement. The Department for Children, Schools and Families has identified the authority as one of 20 where Black pupils are significantly over-represented in exclusions.

The council's strategic development of extended schools has been highly effective. Arrangements for joint commissioning are in place for clusters of schools. Robust links between health, youth and parenting support services have been established. Good progress has also been made with the building schools for the future (BSF) programme. Surplus places in schools continue to decrease year on year.

The excellent variety of recreational facilities available to children and young people contributes to their development, enjoyment and achievement. In particular, there has been an expansion of high quality play provision following a borough-wide audit and public consultation.

### **Areas for development**

- Improve achievement in Key Stage 1.
- Raise the achievement of boys and some Black and minority ethnic groups.

- Reduce the number of exclusions of Black and minority ethnic children and young people.

## **Making a positive contribution**

**Grade 4**

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

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The support given to children and young people makes a real difference to their social and emotional development. An excellent range of services helps young people to take responsibility and to develop the confidence and skills to make their way in their diverse community. There are effective and inclusive consultation arrangements in place. A good participation strategy developed through CYPSP is becoming embedded in practice with more work to do in increasing involvement at a strategic level. Looked after children have opportunities to train as peer researchers and contribute to the recruitment of new staff.

Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups are helped to respond positively to change and challenges in their lives. All key transition points including from home to early years settings are managed carefully. There is a comprehensive range of flexible support services to meet the needs of individuals. For example, the transitions task force, a multi-agency forum set up to support children with the most significant disabilities, has been successful in supporting transition to adult social care.

The council is responsive to its context and takes a preventative approach to the reduction of anti-social behaviour. The preventative youth service has expanded resources through the development of a new programme (KickZ) and the growth of the existing Battersea early intervention team; both are run in partnership with a wide range of other agencies including Chelsea Football club, the youth service and the police. A local targeted youth support team (TYST), created as part of a national pathfinder programme, contributes to early identification and prevention. The team supports 'at risk' young people, including looked after children, in avoiding offending and anti-social behaviour. Core team members act as lead professionals to combine co-ordination of cross-agency support with intensive one to one help for vulnerable young people.

The council's innovative and integrated approach to prevention has secured a significant reduction in first time entrants (FTE) to the youth justice system. Thorough and valuable analysis of FTE data informs the effective targeting and commissioning of services. The council is very clear about its responsibilities as a corporate parent. It has recently approved a 'Champion's' scheme to ensure looked after children are supported and guided with the best services available from all agencies tailored to their individual needs.

Reducing re-offending remains a challenge for the council. This year's performance was below their family average and saw rates increasing. Performance last year was

extremely positive and the challenging target building on this success was ambitious. However, as the council acknowledges, further work is needed to ensure interventions address risk and need.

The council continues to be innovative and high performing in helping children and young people make a positive contribution. At the heart of their success is the determination to find ways of reaching the individual.

### **Area for development**

- Reduce rates of re-offending.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**Grade 4**

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

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is excellent. Well planned and effective action is taken to help families maximise their economic wellbeing. The council has made excellent progress with setting up children's centres. There is strong strategic leadership of the programme and good links have been established with the provision of extended services in schools. Specific projects are being developed to support parents and carers in difficult circumstances. For example, the At Home Childcare project extends childcare over night in homes to support shift workers and give continuity of care.

Family learning continues to be a highly successful component of provision. There has been a strong focus on skills for life courses with over 900 adults participating in family language, literacy and numeracy programmes. Courses in healthy eating, sports and fitness, music, creative arts and information and communication technology also attract high levels of participation.

The council continues to have the lowest level of young people aged 16–18 not in education, employment or training (NEET) in central London. Good quality information, advice and guidance result in a good take-up of courses and jobs by 16 year olds. There are rigorous procedures for tracking young people and every opportunity is taken to guide and encourage those NEET to engage with the options available. For example, 77 participants took part in a new scheme for 16 and 17 year olds who have been NEET for 20 weeks or more whereby they commit to a programme of tailored activities in exchange for £30 per week; nearly half moved from the scheme into education, employment or training.

Good progress has been made with developing a coherent approach to 14–19 education and training. The 14–19 partnership has been reorganised, the strategic plan updated and priorities sharpened. A revised careers education programme is in place together with an e-prospectus.

There was an increase of 31% in the number of children and young people taking vocational courses at Levels 1 and 2 in the last academic year and a further increase of 100 places in Level 1 construction, engineering, and hospitality and catering from

September 2007. The health and society diploma will be offered from September 2008. The council has been successful in bidding for funding to support the development of diplomas. Further enhancement of Level 1 and 2 provision is planned.

There is a sustained trend of improvement in level 2 and 3 outcomes for 19 year olds. In 2006, the proportion achieving level 2 was broadly in line with neighbours whilst level 3 outcomes did not improve as strongly as those in similar authorities.

Community regeneration initiatives address the needs of children and young people. The council has carried out a major review of its youth work service. Young people were asked to consider the future shape of services. The most popular option for future provision was to have a number of larger centres with some local provision delivered through satellite facilities. As a result the council is embarking on a major programme to reconfigure service delivery, investing in four or five large modern facilities across the borough, whilst leaving some smaller locally based provision where there are currently good levels of participation.

Partnership with the Housing Department is effective. The proportion of non-decent homes has been reduced further and the council remains on track to meet the decent homes standard by 2010. Good accommodation for young people leaving care is available with continuing improvement in, and increased availability of, supported lodgings for those requiring extra help towards independent living.

### **Area for development**

- Further improve Level 2 and 3 outcomes for 19 year olds.

## **Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people**

**Grade 4**

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

Overall, the council has maintained a consistently high standard of performance through a challenging period, during which the provision of children's services has been successfully restructured.

The Children and Young People's Plan, derived from a comprehensive analysis of needs, has clear strategic aims which target services effectively. The 'review and refresh' of the plan demonstrates the council has a detailed understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Monitoring and evaluation are robust with timely action taken to address any emerging issues. Management is responsive to the needs of individual young people and where necessary services are re-designed and re-configured to improve access and impact. Financial management is a strength. The council provides excellent value for money and, having completed the realignment of management structures to deliver integrated services, demonstrates excellent capacity for further improvement.

Leadership at a senior level is focused sharply on continuous improvement. Strong and cohesive strategic partnerships are based on shared intentions and driven by ambitious targets. Follow up action to APA recommendations is evident with good improvement secured in most areas. A children's trust manager is in post to drive forward developments and achieve further improvement. The voluntary and community sector and the PCT are fully engaged. Commitment to the involvement of young people is very strong with increasing opportunities for evaluating services.

The workforce is now fully integrated. Effective performance management is embedded in practice with workforce planning and development given a high priority. A sound workforce strategy is in place which includes effective schemes to support recruitment and retention in social care and education.

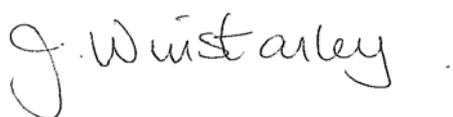
The council has taken time to consider and contextualise best practice in setting up children's trusts. There are clear and robust plans for putting arrangements in place which the council and its partners regard as powerful drivers for further improving outcomes for children and young people.

#### **Area for development**

- Implement plans for putting children's trust arrangements in place.

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 black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager  
Local Services Inspection