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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Mr Chris Kiernan  
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**1 November 2006**

Dear Mr Kiernan

**2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WALTHAM FOREST**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 Annual Performance Assessment process for your local authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

**Summary**

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

<sup>1</sup>

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

The council is making a good contribution to children's services and has taken a holistic approach to service provision with its partner organisations that is showing evidence of improving outcomes for children and young people.

Waltham Forest Council delivers good social care services for children and young people and has good capacity for improvement. The education service is contracted out to EduAction. Through its work with EduAction, the council makes a good contribution to educational improvement, but there is still more to be done.

The council's Children and Young People's strategy for 2006-2009 is ambitious and stretching. It has strong corporate and member support. It incorporates the views of children and their families and the contributions of partner agencies. The council has identified priorities within all the outcome areas, based on its vision and values and partnership priorities. Action plans are used to track progress and allocate responsibility and timescales. Progress against them is reviewed quarterly. Systems are either in place, or being put into place, to support sustained improvements for the children and young people of the area. The council has reviewed the potential impact of health funding constraints and is working with the local Primary Care Trust to mitigate the issues identified in the coming financial year. Additional funding has been identified and provided to support sustained service development within social care and educational services.

The council has shown resilience and a clear intention to move forwards from a significantly challenging position in 2004/05. The council has recently moved from a formal engagement arrangement and has an ambitious corporate strategy for improvement.

## **Being healthy**

The council makes a good contribution to promoting the health of children and young people.

The healthcare of looked after children has seen improvements in target attainment. The average percentage of looked after children who have had health checks, dental checks or both during the last year has increased to 83%, which represents very effective performance. This is close to the average for comparator councils but further improvement is needed. There have been some clear improvements in reducing teenage pregnancy rates and the national interim target has been exceeded. The council acknowledges that further work needs to be done to ensure that the 2010 target is met, but plans are in place to support continued achievements. Some innovative projects involving multi-agency teams are working in a variety of ways with both pregnant teenagers and those at risk of becoming pregnant. The youth offending team (YOT) is working specifically with young men to reduce the level of teenage fatherhood, and the education services are working towards shifting aspirations in vulnerable teenagers.

The substance misuse service needs further work. Current arrangements allow access by children to adult service provision. The result is a lower than expected number of young people in treatment. This has been acknowledged by the council and plans to address this imbalance are being developed. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

(CAMHS), offers an effective fast-track service for looked after children. However, the tier 2 CAMHS service for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities still needs to be implemented. The delay in responding to lower level needs in this group of children was also highlighted in the 2005 assessment. However, the council has targeted children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as a group for improvement. The council reports that it has joined a pan London Action Learning Set and is developing the role of the primary mental health care worker and an early intervention strategy. The new system is due to be operational by 1 September 2006.

The partnership working surrounding 'being healthy' is well evidenced and covers a diverse set of issues and initiatives. These are benefiting from improved joint commissioning and are supported by voluntary sector organisations which offer services that are complementary to statutory provision.

### **Staying safe**

The council makes a good contribution to safeguarding and child protection. Changes in practice management, systems and procedures have helped to improve outcomes. A new IT system has been implemented and business processes have been reviewed to support performance management more effectively; these have improved data capture.

The number of children in need referrals that lead to an initial assessment has remained roughly static. However, the percentage remains below comparator groups and requires further attention. Performance management and governance arrangements are robust and sustainable.

There has been notable improvement in the short-term stability of placements of looked after children with more being placed in foster rather than residential care. However, attention is needed to improve long-term placement stability.

Safeguarding arrangements have been reviewed and changes to the procedures have been implemented during the evidence year. The council has taken a conscious decision to manage risk within the formal system, and reports increased confidence of staff and stabilising of the workforce in this area. Recruitment appears to have stabilised over the last two years and staff turnover figures are down from 26% in 2004/05 to 17.2% in 2005/06. However, it is still a little early to be clear on the long-term positive impact of these changes, which will need further monitoring.

The council has pursued a holistic approach to the staying safe agenda and is working effectively with its partner organisations to ensure that both statutory and non-statutory responsibilities are met. The partnership board arrangements ensure that the joint commissioning of services reflects the strengths of all partner organisations across the sectors.

The increased rate of registrations on the Child Protection Register reflects the council's decision to manage more risk on the Child Protection Register than through the children in need system. The higher re-registration rate in 2005/06 is reportedly linked to an

improvement in the council's performance management systems in the quality assurance function. An examination of a number of de-registrations indicated that some cases had been de-registered inappropriately and were subsequently placed back on the Child Protection Register. Continued monitoring of risk, the quality of assessments and the application of thresholds needs to be undertaken by the council.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The contribution to outcomes in this area is generally good, but the rate of improvement slowed down last year. The council and EduAction both acknowledge that there is a need to raise standards further at all key stages and particularly in Key Stages 2 and 4.

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good in maintained schools but more variable in other settings, though it is improving as a result of the council's careful monitoring and well targeted support. All settings have action plans to bring about further improvement.

Over the last six years results at Key Stages 1 and 2 have improved faster than the national rate and faster than the rates in similar authorities. However, this was not the case between 2004 and 2005, when the results at Key Stage 1 fell a little and the results at Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics did not improve as much as those nationally and so the gap widened. Results at Key Stage 1 remain in line with those in similar authorities, but they are once more below the national figures. Results at Key Stage 2 are below those in similar authorities and well below the national figures. However, the analysis of value added shows that the pupils who left Key Stage 2 in 2005 made more than average progress during the key stage.

At Key Stage 3, considerable progress was made in English in 2005, bringing the pupils' attainment in line with the national average, which represents good achievement. Some improvements were also made in mathematics, narrowing the gap, though attainments remained below the national figure and below similar authorities. In science, the situation remained much the same as in 2004, with results below similar authorities and well below the national figure. Overall, pupils leaving Key Stage 3 in 2005 made average progress during the key stage. The success in English, achieved through the influence of a well respected lead consultant who had the support of all the schools, has led to similar strategies being used to raise standards in mathematics, which are also proving to be effective.

At Key Stage 4 the percentage of pupils gaining five good GCSE grades improved considerably in the five schools that received support from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The mobile pupils' project, based at one of the schools, was particularly effective in raising attainment. In the borough as a whole, the proportion gaining five good GCSE grades in 2005 remained close to that found in similar areas, but the gap widened because the improvements in the borough were less than those in similar authorities and nationally. The proportion gaining at least one pass remained below the figure in similar authorities, though the gap narrowed a little. The proportion gaining five passes rose significantly last year and is now above the national figure. The pupils who took GCSEs in 2005 made

better than average progress during their time in Key Stage 4 and throughout their time in secondary school.

Targeted support to parents of pupils of Black Caribbean or Pakistani heritage has been a factor in raising their attainment above that of their national counterparts in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. The proportion of Pakistani heritage pupils gaining five good grades at GCSE was also above their national counterparts, but the performance of Black Caribbean pupils was a little below the national figure. The attainment of pupils of Black African heritage, in particular of Somali heritage, remains a concern. The strategies that have successfully involved the Black Caribbean and Pakistani communities are now being used to bring about improvement in the attainment of pupils of Black African heritage.

The attendance of children who are looked after has improved this year and is now better than the national average. The proportion that passed five GCSEs last year, at 57%, was well above the national figure of 39%. The proportion gaining five good grades at GCSE increased but was still a little below the national average.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally make good progress. The proportion of statements prepared within 18 weeks has doubled to over 80% between 2002 and 2005 and is now above the national average. The specialist children's service for pupils with disabilities ensures that pupils are given nursery and school places without delay. Most new statements are for children aged two to five, reflecting the priority given to early identification.

Recent school inspections have been largely positive: the overall effectiveness of three quarters of the schools inspected was judged to be good or better. Inspectors judged behaviour to be good or better in all cases and the pupils' enjoyment was found to be at least good in nearly all schools and outstanding in more than a third, including both secondary schools inspected. However, attendance was good in only a third of the schools and was inadequate in nearly a fifth. The number of schools in formal categories of concern has continued to decline.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The contribution to outcomes in this area is good. Over three quarters of recent school inspections judged that the pupils made a good or outstanding contribution to the community. In both the secondary schools inspected, the contribution was outstanding.

The youth service is now reaching a larger number of young people, a proportion that is above the national average, though the council is aware that further improvements are needed to give even better value for money.

Children and young people with disabilities take part in making decisions that affect them. For example, they were involved in a play strategy consultation last summer and those using a respite unit have been involved in deciding which services should be provided.

The council has involved, and engaged, children and young people in the development of their strategy through a wide variety of discussion groups, by holding 17 discussion groups with primary and secondary school pupils and six discussion groups with parents. These were supplemented by a series of discussion groups conducted with young people in receipt of YOT services. This has led to children preparing, and conducting, training sessions for council and other staff on a number of identified issues.

Permanent and fixed-term exclusions rose between 2004 and 2005 but remain broadly in line with national and regional figures. There has been a decline in the number of excluded pupils of Pakistani heritage. However, the numbers of excluded pupils of Black Caribbean and Black African heritage are disproportionate and too high. The proportion of permanently excluded pupils receiving full-time tuition has risen and is now above the national average.

The YOT continues to have a positive effect. The rate of youth offending fell again last year (by 18%), while the proportion of offenders in full-time education, training or employment rose from 75% to 84%. The rate of re-offending is below the national figure and is continuing to fall. An increase in exclusions from school for weapon related incidents and a decrease in the ages of the pupils concerned have prompted a number of initiatives. Training has taken place in all secondary schools and they have agreed common protocols and a policy of zero tolerance. Three quarters of secondary schools now have police officers based in them. A group of young people have been given an opportunity to run a radio station, which gives out regular messages about the dangers of carrying knives. These initiatives have had an effect: there has been a reduction in knife related crime.

The proportion of looked after children who are given final warnings, reprimands or convictions has reduced this year, but it is still a little above the national figure. The proportion participating in reviews is above the national average. Following a large scale consultation, looked after children are providing training for social workers, foster carers, independent rights officers and council managers. They have also provided training for elected members on their corporate parenting responsibilities.

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

The contribution to outcomes in this area is good. Participation in full-time education post-16 has continued to improve and so have A-level results, which in 2005 were in line with the national average. A high proportion of young people are in education, training or employment, despite the relatively low employment rate in the area.

The growth in childcare places continues to be above the national average. The council undertakes regular audits of childcare and surveys of need so that the type, and location, of the provision meets local requirements. The Children's Information Service is highly effective and is provided by a voluntary organisation to support families in maximising their economic well-being.

The 14-19 strategy is developing more flexible pathways at Key Stage 4, including special programmes to support the most vulnerable Year 11 pupils. There has been a strong interest from schools and colleges in the plan that is to be implemented in September 2006.

A very good proportion of care leavers are in education, training or employment: indeed, this proportion is higher than the figure for the borough as a whole and is in the top quartile nationally. However, the educational achievements of care leavers last year were below the national average. Care leavers benefit from the priority they are given to services such as adult mental health, adults with learning difficulties and a range of housing providers. The proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation has risen to over 90%.

Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. There are good transition arrangements, starting the year before they leave education and involving agreement with them, their families and with adult services. The borough's guide on the transition to adulthood has been commended by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. However, the council is aware of the need to improve the support for young people with severe behavioural disorders.

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

The capacity to improve is good. The changes implemented to date are beginning to improve outcomes for children and young people and although in some areas there is still work to do, the performance management and governance arrangements underpin a sustained upward trajectory in line with the strategy. The council is showing ambition and a serious approach to improving outcomes.

The council's service management is good. It has robust systems in place following reviews of procedures and involves members and corporate management as well as directorate staff. The Children and Young People's strategy is ambitious and stretching in its desire to deliver improved and tangible outcomes for the children in the area. The strategy is underpinned by an action plan which focuses in detail on year 1, with milestones and timescales specified, as well as strategies for risk management and governance arrangements.

Financial and budgetary control mechanisms are clear and robust although the council is working within constrained resources. The council manages a difficult financial situation well. The financial issues facing Primary Care Trusts currently have been shared between partner organisations and are being addressed within the area, to minimise the negative impact on service delivery. Partnership working shows a consistent demonstration by departments and organisations, working to improve outcomes in an interdisciplinary manner, and the contract with EduAction has been extended to 2008, with increased monitoring and quality assurance controls embedded into the new contract.

## 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>• health of looked after children</li> <li>• reduction in the teenage pregnancy rate</li> <li>• CAMHS for looked after children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tier 2 CAMHS services for children with learning disabilities</li> <li>• substance misuse treatment service.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progress in safeguarding procedures</li> <li>• stability of placements for looked after children</li> <li>• improvements in referral and assessment process for children in need</li> <li>• partnership working/joint commissioning.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• long-term stability of placements for looked after children</li> <li>• adoptions of looked after children</li> <li>• improvements in final warnings and convictions for looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progress in Key Stages 2 and 4</li> <li>• attainment in English at Key Stage 3</li> <li>• improvement in GCSE results in five targeted schools</li> <li>• attainment of pupils of Black Caribbean and Pakistani heritage in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3</li> <li>• good behaviour and high levels of enjoyment.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attainment in all key stages and particularly in Key Stages 2 and 4</li> <li>• increase the rate of improvement</li> <li>• attainment of pupils of Black African heritage.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good contribution to the community in schools</li> <li>• continued decrease in offending and re-offending rates</li> <li>• participation of looked after children in training a range of professionals.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further improve the youth service</li> <li>• reduce the number of excluded pupils of Black Caribbean and Black African heritage.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased staying on rate post-16 and improved A-level results</li> <li>• the very good proportion of care leavers in employment, training or education</li> <li>• support for young people with disabilities as they come to the end of their time in school.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educational attainment of care leavers</li> <li>• support for young people with severe behavioural disorders.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performance management and governance arrangements</li> <li>• financial management controls</li> <li>• strategy to improve outcomes within a holistic approach with partners.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve workforce stability and HR functions.</li> </ul>

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

- Tier 2 CAMHS services for children with learning disabilities.
- Access to substance misuse services designed for children.
- Achievement of national pregnancy reduction rates.
- Improvements in the long-term stability of placements for looked after children.
- Adoptions of looked after children.
- Changes to the referral and assessment procedures for children in need.
- Attainment at Key Stages 2 and 4.
- Progress of pupils of Black African heritage.
- The number of excluded pupils of Black Caribbean and Black African heritage.
- Educational attainment of care leavers.
- Improvements to workforce stability and HR function.

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  
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**JONATHAN PHILLIPS**

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