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Mr Alan Adams  
Interim Executive Director, Children and Young People Services  
London Borough of Waltham Forest  
2nd Floor, Silver Birch House  
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Uplands Business Park  
Walthamstow, London  
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Dear Mr Adams

## **ANNUAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES ASSESSMENT**

Ofsted guidance published in April 2011 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with other published data.

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of inspection outcomes including the arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against similar authorities and/or national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

|   |                      |   |
|---|----------------------|---|
| 4 | Performs excellently | An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements |
| 3 | Performs well        | An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements               |
| 2 | Performs adequately  | An organisation that meets only minimum requirements            |
| 1 | Performs poorly      | An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements         |

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2010, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

## London Borough of Waltham Forest children's services assessment 2011

|                                |                     |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Children's services assessment | Performs poorly (1) |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|

Children's services in the London Borough of Waltham Forest perform poorly. Performance was adequate in 2010. Two key judgements that are pivotal to the children's services assessment in 2011 underpin this deterioration.

Firstly, a full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services in September 2011 judged the overall effectiveness of services for looked after children as inadequate because provision does not properly meet their needs. Health outcomes are inadequate, as are arrangements for ensuring their safety. The local authority's prioritisation for this group is also inadequate and corporate parenting is ineffective.

In addition, for services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted, while more universal provision is now good or better, specialist provision shows deterioration. Services overall now show substantial weaknesses and only the small minority are good or outstanding. Furthermore, only the minority of services are good at helping to keep children and young people safe, although the majority support them to learn well.

In June 2011, Ofsted's annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection, found many areas of satisfactory practice and six areas for development, two of which remain from the previous inspection. The most recent unannounced inspection also found an area for priority action requiring urgent attention. The full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children in September 2011 found that the local authority had responded swiftly to address this serious weakness. There were significant improvements in the quality of safeguarding services and their overall effectiveness was judged as satisfactory.

Educational standards are in line with national averages at ages 11, 16 and 19, but are below average at age five. Overall standards continue to improve but at the age of 16, the attainment of minority ethnic groups is below that found in similar areas and nationally. As found elsewhere, changes to schools are taking place and more have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in this assessment.

### Strengths

- For the youngest children, all five children's centres are good or outstanding.
- The large majority of provision for early years education in nursery and primary schools is good or outstanding and achievement at age five continues to improve, the latter addressing an area for development from

last year. The proportion of five-years-olds from low-income families who show a good level of development is about the same as in similar areas and nationally, and the achievement gap with others of the same age in Waltham Forest reduced well in 2010.

- The large majority of primary schools are now good or outstanding. Two primary schools no longer require special measures and another three primary schools that are outstanding have become academies. Of the two schools that remain inadequate, Ofsted's monitoring visits show they are making at least satisfactory progress and have received strong support from the local authority.
- Eleven-year-olds make the progress expected from age seven and, at the end of Key Stage 2, attainment at age 11 has improved much faster than that found nationally. However, the 2011 provisional results for 11-year-olds are below national figures and are lower than those achieved in 2010.
- Most secondary schools are good or outstanding. The large majority have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and poor attendance by some young people is reducing steadily. At the age of 16, the proportion of young people gaining at least five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, shows steady improvement. Young people from low-income families show attainment above the national average for this group, and in line with similar areas. The gap with their peers in Waltham Forest is closing, although showing an increase in 2010. Attainment for young people with special educational needs is also above the national average for this group and in line with similar areas, but the gap with their peers in Waltham Forest shows little sign of closing.
- Almost all 17-year-olds are in education or training and more continue in learning or gain employment, including care leavers. At age 19, more young people gain higher level and other qualifications. Young people from low-income families achieve above those in similar areas and well above national figures. Gaps with their peers are closing, significantly at level 2, addressing an area for development from last year.
- For looked after children, the one children's home run by the local authority remains good. Of the services that are commissioned by the local authority, the very large majority of providers are good or better, including children's homes.

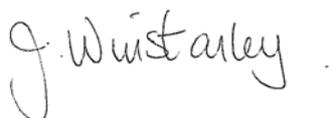
### **Areas for further improvement**

- The majority of early years and childcare is now good or better overall, showing improvement since last year. Substantially more childcare is good, addressing an area for development identified in 2010. However, despite some improvement almost half of childminders and over one third of childcare remains only satisfactory, showing performance below that in similar areas.

- At the age of 16, minority ethnic groups show attainment that is below that found in similar areas and nationally, although gaps with their peers in Waltham Forest are closing.
- After the age of 16, the majority of provision remains only satisfactory, although showing improvement. Secondary school sixth forms show more good provision but the college of further education is satisfactory. One sixth form college is good but the other is satisfactory.
- For young people not in mainstream education, only the minority of provision is good or better overall. This shows deterioration from last year. Special schools are now showing some satisfactory provision, pupil referral units show more provision that is satisfactory and one special school sixth form is now inadequate.
- For looked after children, the inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children identified two actions requiring immediate attention and seven that require attention in the near future. In addition, inspection shows that all arrangements for adoption and fostering are now only satisfactory because all three independent providers are now no better than this. Of the children's homes run by independent providers, six are good or outstanding but six others are only satisfactory, although none are now inadequate.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment