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17 December 2008

Mr Jim Taylor  
Executive Director for Services for Children and Young People  
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council  
Council Offices  
Wellington Road  
Ashton-under-Lyne  
OL6 6DL

Dear Mr Taylor

## **Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council 2008**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

<b>Assessment judgement area</b>	<b>APA grade</b>
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	2
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale  
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

## Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 3

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council provides good services for children and young people in most respects. The recent JAR judged services for looked after children, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and mental health needs to be good. The review judged arrangements for safeguarding children and young people to be adequate.

There has been sustained improvement in educational performance and in helping young people prepare for the world of work. This has impacted particularly well on outcomes for vulnerable groups including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Innovative projects, such as ‘BOAT’ (Better Outcomes Achieved Together) for teenage mothers are increasing the number of young people progressing to employment, education and training. There has been good progress in improving health outcomes generally with a notable reversal in the upward rate of teenage conceptions. For much of the past year the council has built the necessary capacity to improve services across all Every Child Matters outcomes. Some challenges still exist, particularly in some areas of child protection. This impedes the council’s capacity to improve, which is judged as good overall. This confirms the judgement reached in the JAR.

## Being healthy

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are good child and adolescent mental health services ensuring timely access to support; specialist support for 16- to 17-year-olds and 24 hour emergency cover. These services are developing well to meet the needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</li> <li>▪ The rate of improvement in infant mortality is good at 4.5 per 1,000 live births compared to 5.5 per 1000 live births in similar councils.</li> <li>▪ There are excellent health services for looked after children with 98% having an annual health assessment compared to 84% in similar councils. This is the eighth best performance in England.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work in the last year has addressed the long term trend of increasing rates of teenage conceptions and a reduction has been achieved. Despite this, the council acknowledges there is still much to do to bring rates to a level close to similar council areas.</li> </ul>

## Staying safe

## Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses, many of which were identified in the recent JAR. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The JAR recently reported that the Local Safeguarding Children Board is working effectively.</li> <li>▪ Services for looked after children were judged as good in the JAR.</li> <li>▪ All children on the Child Protection Register, and looked after children, are allocated to suitably qualified social workers.</li> <li>▪ Recent inspections judged fostering and adoption services to be good.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The JAR judged safeguarding arrangements to be adequate and highlighted inconsistent work in the quality of initial and core assessment and a limited out of hours service as key areas for improvement.</li> <li>▪ The council has reviewed 92.3% of child protection cases on time. This is below the key national threshold of 92.5%.</li> </ul>

## Enjoying and achieving

## Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This is in line with the council's self-assessment. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is good support to promote educational performance; as a result, standards are rising. The gap between local levels of attainment and the national average is steadily narrowing.</li> <li>▪ An increasing number of schools and early years settings are being judged by Ofsted as good or better.</li> <li>▪ The number of young people leaving care aged 16-and-over with five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C has risen significantly and is now well above both statistical neighbours and the national average.</li> <li>▪ The contribution of services to outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was judged good in the recent JAR.</li> </ul>
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<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The rate of fixed term exclusions for children with statements of educational need in both primary and secondary mainstream schools is high. It has risen to well above that of statistical neighbours and the national.</li> <li>▪ As stated in the 2007 APA, progress at Key Stage 1 remains slow. Standards are below statistical neighbours in reading and well below in mathematics.</li> </ul> |
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## Making a positive contribution

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<b>Major strengths</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children and young people contribute well to school life with all secondary schools and special schools having school councils and 85% of primary schools having representative bodies.</li> <li>▪ Many looked after children are fully involved in decisions around their lives. Some 96% contributed to their reviews compared to 93% in similar councils.</li> <li>▪ The JAR reports a number of good examples where children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have the opportunity to contribute to decisions about their lives. These include a good proportion of children and young people participating in their annual statement reviews.</li> </ul> |
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<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The rate of supervised young offenders in full time employment, education and training has recently deteriorated to 55.9%. This figure is much lower than the proportion in similar council areas of 79.4%.</li> </ul> |
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## Achieving economic well-being

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<b>Major strengths</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The JAR identifies strong partnerships which promote awareness of career opportunities and raise the aspirations of young people.</li> <li>▪ Post-16 provision is judged as good and outstanding by recent Ofsted inspections. The curriculum is praised by Ofsted for being very responsive to local needs.</li> <li>▪ The percentage of young people not in employment, education or training is below that of statistical neighbours, but remains above the national average. It</li> </ul> |
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has fallen overall since 2005.

- The JAR reports that many care leavers and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are engaged in employment, education or training post-16.
- An increasing number of young people undertake and complete an apprenticeship. The number is well above that of statistical neighbours and the national average.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- The proportion of young people completing Year 11 who continue in learning is improving, but is still below statistical neighbours and the national average.
- Since the 2007 APA, the percentage of young people achieving Level 2 and 3 by age 19 has increased slightly but is still below that of statistical neighbours and the national average.

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

**Grade 3**

The council’s capacity to improve, including the management of children’s services, is good. The recent JAR identified the ambition for children and young people, shared by all partners, as outstanding. Priorities in the Children and Young People’s Plan are appropriate and reflect careful self-evaluation. Priorities link effectively to other plans and resources are well directed. Financial management and value for money are good. However, inconsistencies in the quality of performance management identified in the JAR are impacting negatively on some specific outcomes for children and young people. Improving post-16 provision and effective partnership work has raised young peoples’ aspirations. Performance data is used well and many of the issues identified in the previous APA have been successfully tackled.

**Major strengths**

- The council’s capacity to improve was judged as good in the JAR.
- The JAR judged the quality of service management as good. It states that ‘leadership is dynamic and focused on the key priorities.’ A clear example of this is the effective analysis of school performance, which led to the council revising its arrangements for supporting and challenging schools and the review of children’s play which led to significant additional investment in facilities across the borough.
- Good partnership working exists at both operational and strategic level. A good example is the innovative BOAT project to support teenage mothers.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- Weaknesses in the consistency of some performance management arrangements are affecting the accuracy of impact evaluations on the specific outcomes achieved by children and young people.

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.

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.

Yours sincerely

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

Divisional Manager  
Local Services Inspection