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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Smith

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN TAMESIDE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) 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 awarded¹
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

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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

Tameside MBC delivers above minimum requirements for children and young people. The contribution of all services to delivering outcomes for children and young people is good in all areas. Improvements from the previous year's APA confirm that the council has good capacity to improve its services further.

Being healthy

The council makes a good contribution to improving the health of young people. The council has developed a range of strategies in partnership with other agencies to improve the health of children and young people across the borough. Children's health is promoted amongst parents and carers through initiatives such as Looking After You and Your Child which is delivered through the Share Plus programme.

A high percentage of schools have signed up to the Tameside Healthy Schools Scheme. The creation of the Healthy Food and Drink in Schools award is a further initiative, which contributes to the promotion of healthier lifestyles for children and young people. There has been increased participation by Tameside pupils in inter-school competitions. Sports participation is higher than the national average and that of comparable councils. Over the last three years, 4,500 people have taken part in local physical activity sessions for 0 to 4 year-olds and their families delivered by Hyde Sure Start and Sports Development.

Good progress has been made in the attendance of looked after children at their health assessments. The number of looked after children who have received health assessments has shown a marked improvement since last year. The reorganisation of the services for young people with disabilities has the potential to deliver more focused outcomes to users and carers.

Whilst the progress towards an integrated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has been positive, the council recognises that the protocols for partnership working, with a particular focus on the service for those aged 16 to 17, need to be further developed and implemented. There has been an improvement in reducing the conception rates among 15 to 17 year-olds, but more needs to be done as the figure remains above the national average and that of comparable councils.

Staying safe

Performance in this outcome area has improved over the last 12 months and is now good. Some aspects have improved considerably, whilst others require more targeted attention. Schools provide a safe environment for learners and help children develop an awareness of key risks relating to health and safety.

Overall safeguarding arrangements for children and young people have improved. A particular strength of the council now is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), which has helped to reduce the number of referrals. All the children on the register continue to have a named social worker. Child protection reviews are consistently held on time. The percentage of children on the register per 10,000 of the child population has dropped from 24.1% in 2004/05 to 19.7% in 2005/06. This is better than comparable councils (23.5%) and the England average (25.3%). The council acknowledges that further work is needed on the monitoring arrangements for safeguarding the looked after children placed out of the borough.

The total number of looked after children has reduced and the council's performance on the number of children adopted has improved further and is now very good. The proportions of initial assessments and core assessments have increased. Although the percentage of core assessments completed within 35 days has improved from 36% in 2004/5 to 66% in 2005/6 it is still below the England average of 74%.

Not all looked after children are in long-term stable placements. The number of looked after children allocated to a qualified social worker has improved from 82% in 2004/05 to 91% in 2005/06, although this is still below the national average and that of comparable councils; the council acknowledges the need for further development in the coming year.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the council makes to ensuring children and young people achieve at schools and enjoy their education is good with noticeable improvement in a number of areas. The quality of early years provision and associated training and support continues to be a strength. Of the providers inspected, the majority were judged good in this area. High standards are encouraged through the Tameside Quality Standards Framework and Sheffield Quality Kitemark. The Foundation Stage Regional Adviser has cited the work in Tameside as exemplary practice.

School standards are satisfactory compared to national averages with good improvement at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. Standards at Key Stage 1 fell in 2005 but generally remained close to national averages. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 2, although the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level is below the national average in all core subjects. The local authority recognises the importance of improving primary school teachers' skills in order to raise standards further. Overall, the 2005 Key Stage 2 results ranked Tameside as the third most improved local authority. Pupils make comparatively better progress within the primary phase than they do in secondary education. Results at Key Stages 3 and 4 have improved and are in line with those of statistical neighbours apart from in science. GCSE results in 2005 improved more rapidly than the national trend. The arrangements to monitor, challenge, support and intervene in schools continue to prove successful. There are no schools subject to special measures, although there is one school that received a notice to improve in spring 2006.

There is appropriate differentiated provision and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with some integration of provision alongside mainstream schools. The proportion of children and young people with statements of special educational needs who make adequate progress has increased. There has been good progress to eliminate underachievement by Bangladeshi boys. There has also been continuing steady improvement in the attendance and attainment of looked after children. The percentage of looked after children who sat at least one GCSE equivalent exam is above both national and comparable councils' averages. The proportion of young people leaving care with five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C is in line with the national average.

The good progress on improving attendance and managing behaviour, noted in the 2005 APA, has been sustained this year. Attendance is in line with national averages in both primary and secondary schools. There has been a 20% reduction in the number of permanent exclusions and an even larger fall in the number of fixed term exclusions.

Well considered plans are in place to cope with the declining numbers of young people of school age. A start has been made on addressing the issues of over capacity in primary schools through some rationalisation of schools. Consultation is ongoing. The council is fully involved in planning for an academy, sponsored by a local housing association, as well as awaiting developments with the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Making a positive contribution

Performance in this area is good. There is a very positive spirit and a strong culture of consultation running through the organisation, from school level decision-making by pupils to strategic planning at council level which also includes children and young people. Schools at each phase are achieving high grades in their Ofsted inspection reports for: behaviour; personal development and well-being; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and the extent to which pupils make a positive contribution. In the special schools inspected, these areas are mostly outstanding. An extremely wide range of activities and events is available to enable children and young people to contribute to their own development, including reviews of statements.

There are also many opportunities to contribute to the services provided, for instance, young people sometimes help to interview staff during recruitment. Community projects such as a supermarket's retail theft initiative involve different groups of young people. However, there is little evidence of minority ethnic groups being directed towards relevant community or environment projects. Participation includes children from vulnerable groups, such as Young Carers, who have been closely consulted about school issues, resulting in their own conference. Likewise, looked after children participate in reviews, staff interviews and delivering training. There has been steady reduction in the number of looked after children involved with the youth justice system.

Achieving economic well-being

The authority makes a good contribution to children and young people's economic well-being. Families are very well supported by a range of partners. Good quality information is provided by the Children's Information Service, for example, access to childcare and financial entitlement. There has been an increase in the uptake of direct payments by families of children and young people aged 8 to 18 with disabilities.

Young people are helped well to prepare for their working life. Secondary schools and special schools in particular take effective steps to ensure that young people develop appropriate skills for the future. Partnership activity continues to be a strength. There is good collaboration on the Tameside Campus provision for 14 to 19 year-olds involving local colleges and schools. The resulting coordination of education and training for 14 to 19 year-olds is strong. It is responsive to learners' needs and subject to regular review. The performance of sixth form learners on advanced level courses remains a key strength with results that are above statistical neighbours. There is recognition of the need to continue to improve progression rates both to post 16 courses as well as to higher education.

There have been improvements in the proportion of care leavers in education, employment and training (EET), although the percentage is still falling short of this year's

target and remains below that of statistical neighbours and the national picture. Children and young people are prioritised within regeneration projects such as the Ashton All Stars. Over three quarters of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are in EET and are monitored and supported by a Connexions personal adviser. Appropriate action supports young people with urgent housing needs, but there is no ongoing measure of the proportion of children and young people living in housing that meets the Decent Homes Standard.

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

The council is strongly committed to improving its services for children and young people. The recent refinement and restructuring of an already strong leadership and management team has been done to better integrate children's services, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The council is forward looking with recent developments anticipating and running parallel to the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda. For example, consultation within the borough led to the identification of six priority areas which mesh well with the five ECM outcomes. Continuing good levels of consultation and effective budget management contribute to high quality and sustainable long-term planning for children's services.

Well-considered and conceived strategic planning has led to improved outcomes for young people, including minority ethnic communities and other vulnerable groups. Last year's APA indicated the need to increase the pace of change in improving children's services. This has happened with good progress evident in improvements, some rapid, relating to all five outcomes. These improvements confirm the good capacity of the local authority to continue to improve its services for children and young people.

Performance management is comprehensive and effective. The council's work on self-assessment for the APA was mainly descriptive whereas it could have been more evaluative in judging performance. There is good practice in the detailed analysis of data in areas such as education.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looked after children outcomes, including a positive trend in attendance at health assessments • high sign-up rate for the healthy schools initiative • successful promotion of healthy eating. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing teenage pregnancies for 15 to 17 year-olds • further development of CAMHS.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective use of the CAF • reduced numbers of looked after children and improved levels of adoption • timeliness of child reviews for the Child Protection Register. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-term stability of placements • monitoring arrangements for safeguarding looked after children outside of the borough • allocation of qualified social workers to children leaving care – remains an issue from the 2005 APA • timeliness of assessments.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early years provision and associated training • support for school improvement • rising attainment at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 • progress on the underachievement of Bangladeshi boys identified in the 2005 APA • improved attendance and attainment for looked after children. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Stage 1 test results • increase the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels at Key Stage 2
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective, frequent and responsive consultation with young people, including minority ethnic groups, (therefore, their ideas are acted on) • high levels of participation by young people in planning and managing services and activities • progress on areas identified for improvement in the 2005 APA (therefore, 'limited ambition regarding lowering looked after children offending rates'). 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeted participation by minority ethnic groups, in initiating voluntary activities to support the community and environment.

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constructive and effective multi-agency working on the 14 to 19 strategy • excellent communication of information using a wide range of media • cohesive provision at 14 to 19 through the Tameside Campus collaboration • standards and achievement amongst sixth form students which remain strong. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progression to higher education and work progression at ages 16 and 17 • tighter measures for monitoring the quality of young people's housing.
<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inspirational leadership team • proactive culture with early intervention • firmly embedded review processes • wide consultation with increasing involvement and ownership • integration of services with good partnership working • progress on issues identified in the 2005 APA. 	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more evaluative self-assessment.

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

Being healthy:

- reducing teenage pregnancies for 15 to 17 year-olds
- further development of CAMHS.

Staying safe:

- long-term stability of placements
- monitoring arrangements for the safeguarding of looked after children outside of the borough
- allocation of qualified social workers to children leaving care – remains an issue from the 2005 APA
- timeliness of assessments.

Enjoying and achieving:

- Key Stage 1 test results
- increase the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels at Key Stage 2

Making a positive contribution:

- targeted participation by minority ethnic groups, in initiating voluntary activities to support the community and environment.

Achieving economic well-being:

- progression to higher education and work progression at ages 16 and 17
- tighter measures for monitoring the quality of young people's housing.

Management of children's services

- more evaluative self-assessment.

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

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