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Mr Andy Roberts
Strategic Director for Families
Surrey County Council
County Hall, Room 116
Penryhn Road
Kingston-upon-Thames
Surrey
KT1 2DN

Dear Mr Roberts

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Surrey County 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.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	1
Being healthy	2
Staying safe	1
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	2
Achieving economic well-being	2
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	1

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

Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 1

Surrey County Council delivers services for children and young people which do not meet the minimum requirements for users. The council’s capacity to improve, including its management of services is inadequate. Following the JAR inspection the council has taken swift and robust action to improve governance and capacity in leadership. Processes have been put in place to address the JAR issues focusing on narrowing the gap between all children and the most vulnerable. Although there are some early signs of impact, many actions are at a very early stage and as of yet have had limited impact. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk, or requiring safeguarding, is inadequate.

Outcomes for children and young people in Surrey with regard to universal services are generally good. Health indicators are, on the whole, better than statistical neighbours. However, there are significant weaknesses in services to the most vulnerable. For example, there is inconsistent provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and there are significant numbers of teenage pregnancies in looked after young women. Early years settings and schools are effective and lead to high levels of attainment for most groups of children. However, the gap between children who are looked after and their peers by the end of Key Stage 4 is still very wide. Exclusion rates are high, particularly for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Not enough excluded children get sufficient appropriate education. Generally, outcomes in economic well-being are good. There is good planning for the 14–19 agenda and provision is good and improving. Few young people are not in education, employment or training. However, there remain weaknesses in enabling care leavers and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be fully supported into independence. The council is addressing this although it is too early to judge the impact of actions. The recent report on the Surrey youth justice service considers that although it had the potential to be a strong service this potential was not being realised. The provision of prevention and intervention services for young people at risk of offending is neither coherent nor coordinated across the county.

Being healthy

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good in universal services.
- The Child Health Promotion Programme is implemented effectively with good multi-agency approaches to some activities, for example smoking and substance misuse.
- Good multi-agency parent/infant mental health service.

<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rate of decline in teenage pregnancy is inadequate and the proportion of young women who are looked after that become pregnant is increasing. ▪ A significant number of looked after children do not have an annual health check. ▪ The provision of sexual health advice and contraceptive services is inconsistent across the county. Some schools are reluctant to engage with sexual health staff and preventive programmes. The county has missed its own Chlamydia screening target. ▪ Effective models of multi-agency working for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not provided consistently across the county. ▪ Reconfigured arrangements for the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) have not yet made significant impact on inconsistent access to services and the skill levels of staff at all tiers of service. |
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Staying safe

Grade 1

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

<p>Major strengths</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most children feel safe, particularly in school. ▪ The rate of re-registration of those children previously subject to a protection plan is better than the national average. ▪ Good systems enable tracking and provision for children missing from education. |
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<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to the varied range of early intervention and preventive services is inconsistent across the county. Thresholds for services are both too high and inconsistent. ▪ There are increased numbers of referrals and repeat referrals. ▪ Initial and core assessments are of poor quality and not completed within timescales. ▪ The proportion of child-protection reviews that are held on time is below the national average. ▪ The stability of placements for looked after children has deteriorated. ▪ Progress by the Local Safeguarding Children Board in fully embracing the protection brief and moving towards the wider safeguarding brief has been slow. ▪ New systems to ensure that all staff working with children across the partnership have a criminal record bureau (CRB) check, qualification and |
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identity check have not yet been fully implemented.

Enjoying and achieving

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.

Major strengths

- There is good quality early years provision and children reach standards well above those found nationally.
- The educational achievement of children at all key stages is significantly above that found nationally, with improvements from an already high base in some aspects.
- A very high proportion of schools are either good or outstanding when inspected.
- Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Children and young people in the specialist units in main stream schools make good progress.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Fixed and permanent exclusions are high and the proportion of children and young people with statements that are excluded from both the primary and secondary sector has risen. In the secondary sector this is well above average. Nearly half of statemented children in secondary school have fixed term exclusions.
- The percentage of permanently excluded children and young people provided with 20 hours or more of tuition a week is one of the lowest in the country.
- Too many looked after children who do well at Key Stage 3 do not progress to realise their potential at Key Stage 4. The proportion of looked after children that attain five or more good GCSEs, at 9.6%, is significantly below their peers.
- The completion rate of statements prepared within 18 weeks both including and excluding exceptional is well below average and has decreased from previous years.

Making a positive contribution

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An effective and council wide culture of consulting and listening to young people, including hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups, when making decisions about individual and service provisions. Some aspects of provision, decision making and funding of projects have been devolved to young people. ▪ Young people are equipped to take responsibility and influence services through programmes such as Total Respect and Take Part Take Power. ▪ There is a very good and increasing rate of participation by looked after children in their reviews. ▪ Effective voluntary sector work to provide support and leisure opportunities for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities particularly for those aged under 12. ▪ There has been a steadily reducing and positive trend in the percentage of looked after children who are cautioned or convicted for offences committed.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The provision of prevention and intervention services for young people at risk of offending is neither coherent nor coordinated across the county. ▪ Work with children and young people who have offended only meets minimum requirements.

Achieving economic well-being

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good post-16 educational outcomes. The percentage of young people gaining Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 continues to improve and is consistently well above the national average. ▪ There is effective information and guidance to help to keep young people in education, employment or training. The percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training at ages 16–18 and at age 19 remains very low including young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. ▪ There is a good and increasing range of 14–19 curriculum opportunities, including diplomas, with some good local partnership work and growing employer engagement.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In work-based learning, overall success rates for all groups of young people, although improving year on year, remain below the national average. ▪ The percentage of teenage mothers who are in employment or training is

lower than found nationally.

- Although all looked after young people had a personal advisor in 2007/08, the percentage with a pathway plan continues to decline and is significantly below average.
- The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has increased but is still below average.
- Although the council has recently updated its accommodation strategy for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there is insufficient access to appropriate housing.
- Insufficient access for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to benefits information or support to help with travel costs to college.

Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services

Grade 1

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is inadequate and its management of these services is inadequate. The council and the partnership have a vision of what they want to achieve and this is set out clearly in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and reiterated in their self-assessment. There is evidence of effective management in some areas. For example, the quality of support provided for schools. Following the JAR inspection the council immediately established an improvement board chaired by the leader of the council with independent support and challenge provided to members by an external consultant. A number of senior managers were immediately replaced and additional interim capacity has been secured to the heads of Children's Services and head of Safeguarding to support the improvement agenda. An investigation commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) was in agreement with the council's own analysis of the underlying problems and concluded that the council had commitment and sufficient capacity for improvement. Nevertheless for this APA there is not yet sufficient evidence of a track record of improvement in outcomes.

The action plan put in place to address the JAR inadequate judgements focuses on narrowing the gap between all children and the most vulnerable. This is being developed with all key public partners. There are some early signs of impact. For example, case file audits of all children in need have been completed, resulting in a substantial number of additional children being placed in child protection procedures and some being brought into care. However, other actions are at a very early stage and the impact of it is not yet evident. Therefore many aspects of provision and partnership working that were identified as being underdeveloped at the time of the JAR still remain.

Financial management is good and overall the council provides value for money. However, the cost of placements for looked after children is much higher than average with a high proportion of young people in agency placements and outside county boundaries.

Workforce planning is at an early stage and cannot demonstrate impact. In some aspects this is inadequate. For example, the percentage of residential child care workers who have obtained the NVQ Level 3 in Health and Social Care is significantly below that found nationally.

The JAR identified performance management as inadequate. The council acknowledges that a key requirement is to embed a strong performance management culture within Children's Services. Work has begun on strengthening performance management arrangements, particularly through the introduction of new safeguarding arrangements and weekly performance reporting. A new performance management framework was agreed in June 2008.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council and its partners have a vision for children and young people that includes ensuring that the gap between all children and the most vulnerable is reduced. Improvement planning since the JAR has focused on this. ▪ Political leadership is strong. ▪ Swift and robust action was taken following the JAR inspection with the establishment of an improvement board and increased capacity for sustained change.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership working is not consistent and in some areas it is underdeveloped. The overall pace of integrated working is slow. ▪ Systems to ensure safe recruitment of staff are not yet embedded. ▪ The proportion of suitably qualified residential child care workers is below average. ▪ Performance management is not yet embedded at all levels within the council. ▪ The cost of placements for looked after children is much higher than average with a high proportion of young people in agency placements and outside county boundaries.

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



Juliet Winstanley
 Divisional Manager
 Local Services Inspection