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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Webster

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SURREY COUNTY 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.	2

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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

Surrey County Council provides a good service for children and young people. The strengths noted in the APA letter of 2005 have been maintained in education and most of the areas for improvement have been addressed. The majority of services can demonstrate how they are improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people. However, the council's social care services contribute only minimum requirements to children and their families overall. The council has a good capacity to improve its performance for all its children's services responsibilities.

Being healthy

The council makes a good contribution towards improving the health of children and young people in the area. Early years settings provide healthy environments for young children. Support is provided for parents and carers to enable them to keep children healthy. A multi-agency group oversees health care for travellers and improvement has been made in line with the 2005 APA recommendations. Performance on reducing conceptions amongst teenagers is much better than both comparable councils and England overall, and this aspect has particularly improved for looked after children. Surrey has dedicated nurses and a doctor specifically for looked after children and the performance in addressing their health needs has improved to become very good, which is better than comparable councils.

Progress made towards comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is better than comparable councils and the average in England. School nurses are funded by each Primary Care Trust to focus on mental health issues and improve the delivery of mental health services for children and young people. Partnership work to improve CAMHS delivery has been awarded Beacon Status. Positive action is being taken to reduce drug and alcohol misuse through the establishment of four specialist posts.

Progress towards the Healthy Schools Standard has been slow and the target date for half the schools achieving the standard is unlikely to be met. However, inspection shows that over 90% of the 52 schools inspected since September 2005 have good or outstanding provision to promote healthy living. Over half the schools in the authority have approved travel plans to encourage walking to school and evidence has been produced that children have responded well to a My Travel Diary.

Staying safe

The contribution that the council makes to ensuring children and young people stay safe is adequate. Most early years settings provide safe environments. A variety of appropriate and tailored accident prevention training helps to ensure children are kept safe in schools. This aspect is judged almost invariably good in those schools inspected.

There is a mixed picture about how effective the arrangements are for responding to social care referrals of new work. The timeliness of core assessments has improved to a very good standard. The percentage of the child population receiving core assessments is very high compared to other councils and this has resource implications. The timeliness of initial assessments is better than comparable councils. However, the assessment processes

including front line duty services have revealed inconsistencies across teams. One particular and significant referral received too slow a response, although the longer term engagement with this matter was subsequently dealt with well.

Child protection work is mostly a positive picture. The number of children on the Child Protection Register has further reduced in 2005/06. All child protection reviews were once again carried out within the appropriate timescale. In line with comparable councils all children on the Child Protection Register have an allocated social worker.

The Safeguarding Board has now been established and appropriate protocols are in place. Preventative services are being expanded. Following the development of the Families First service, both preventative and kinship care arrangements have ensured that the number of looked after children has reduced. Targeted carer recruitment for vulnerable children has led to more black and minority ethnic adopters being approved.

The arrangements for looked after children have some really good strengths but overall they could be better. The percentage of looked after children with a named and qualified social worker has increased to a very good standard. The performance in 2005/06 of keeping all children in stable placements, with minimum moves, is very good. By contrast the stability of placement for long-term fostered children has not improved to an acceptable level. There is yet to be a significant enough reduction in the number of looked after children in residential care. There is a variable picture about the council's own fostering services. Some fostering service inspection standards have not been met, such as the availability of written guidelines for safe caring in each foster care home; however, there are also areas of good practice including comprehensive reports on prospective foster carers. Requirements from the Commission for Social Care Inspection are in place and action plans are produced by the council to ensure improvement. Performance on adoptions continues to be very good and Surrey has secured ten new residence orders. Transition planning for the move from children's services to adults' services for children with disabilities is well embedded.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution that the council makes to ensuring children and young people achieve at schools and enjoy their education remains good with some strong features. The key priorities of the council relating to improving attainment and attendance have been met, but less strongly in some aspects such as the attainment of looked after children.

Early years provision is good and becoming more extensive; no setting was judged inadequate in 2005/06. Children are supported well to make a good start on the early learning goals and a high proportion reach them. A joint initiative with a borough council to promote nursery education to black and minority ethnic families has been launched and a playbus provides an effective outreach service at traveller sites.

Overall, in 2005 performance at all four key stages has improved from a level which was already high. Trends have been upwards on almost all measures and the results are invariably above national averages; primary school results are also above statistical

neighbours. Over three fifths of young people attain five or more higher GCSE grades and over half attain that level including English and mathematics. Virtually all pupils attain at least one graded GCSE result; the percentage increased in 2005 but is slightly less than in similar authorities. No schools were below the current floor targets for GCSE.

Improvement has been achieved for some black and minority ethnic groups, but targeted support is aimed at boys of Pakistani heritage in one area, where attainment was disappointing. The attainment of looked after children shows improvement but remains much lower than their peers in Surrey. Additional support is given by way of improved access to computers and extra tuition by a team of 21 tutors. Traveller pupils, who represent a large group in Surrey, improved their performance on most measures, and considerably so at GCSE, with well over four fifths attaining at least one pass, underpinned by improved attendance.

Value added is in line with the national picture up to age 14, but not within Key Stage 4 which is below average. Schools with low value added in this key stage are receiving targeted support from the improvement service. Support is also being given to selected schools in English, where results slipped very slightly at Key Stage 2, though these results were still above similar authorities. Inspection evidence since September 2005 confirms that achievement is good overall in the schools inspected.

Attendance continues to improve in both primary and secondary schools and is in line with similar authorities. There has been a notable decrease in unauthorised absences in primary schools. Home-school link workers have been effective in improving attendance in eight primary schools. Behaviour is good overall. However, whilst permanent exclusions fell, fixed-term exclusions rose, especially in special schools, to a level which is higher than the national average. This is being addressed in one special school where targeted additional support, with systematic monitoring, has led to significant improvements over the year. Provision for permanently excluded pupils has improved and is adequate but remains below that offered nationally.

The proportion of schools subject to a category of concern is slightly higher than in similar authorities and nationally. Robust action including closure is being taken, but the authority recognises that its systems for identifying weaknesses in primary schools need further refinement. Effective improvement strategies leading to tangible progress have included mentoring by an experienced head, collaborative working and disbanding an ineffective governing body. Support from the council is rated positively by schools, though some feel that school placement planning could be improved. Reviews of surplus places are being undertaken in some areas, including those with schools in a category of concern. Admissions policies have been adjusted to give greater priority to vulnerable children, who are supported by a specialist team to advocate for equity in securing a school place.

Making a positive contribution

The contribution made by the council to this outcome area is good. Most early years settings provide good support, including for children with special needs. Almost all schools inspected since September 2005 enable pupils to make a positive contribution to the community through school councils and charitable fund raising. Better communication and cooperation between families have been achieved through home-school link workers, as well as through parenting courses and workshops for those who have difficulties, delivered by the attendance and inclusion team.

The youth service, which reaches a relatively high percentage of young people, enables a good range of learning and recreational activities, including an extensive Duke of Edinburgh scheme. The youth service is particularly successful in reaching vulnerable young people and those at risk.

Parents and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) are well supported when moving from one school to another. An increasing range of entry level courses are being offered post-16, partly in conjunction with the youth service. While the participation of looked after children in their reviews decreased slightly, their views on various issues have been sought and changes made such as on the selection of adults invited to attend a review. Transition to adult social care services is underpinned by joint planning and working, and is part of the national pilot for person centred planning. Support for children leaving care is extensive.

The Surrey Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) has been influenced by children's views, including those with LDD, and an intention to continue to increase their involvement in decision making in a variety of ways is incorporated. The re-launch of the Surrey Youth Parliament, with an associated web-site, offers increased diversity with seats specifically assigned to black and minority ethnic and looked after children groups. Young people achieve well through their involvement in youth forums as well as the youth parliament, but there is limited evidence that young people mentor their peers and initiate voluntary activities.

Surrey crime reduction partnerships have made a targeted response to various issues in a council where levels of crime are generally low. Performance in relation to final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children have improved. There are now two posts established to support the work with young offenders, providing increased capacity for peer support and work with CAHMS. The drug action and alcohol team are active in prevention and have enabled screening of all young offenders for substance misuse. About 80% are assessed within five days and, where necessary, referred on to specialist support. The work is supported by a range of external partners, including five new business partnerships. Anti-social behaviour is being tackled positively through youth projects and in one area a 74% decrease has been achieved. Though a reduction in recidivism has not been achieved in 2005/06, a careful analysis of the underlying reasons has been undertaken.

Achieving economic well-being

The council makes a good contribution to enabling children and young people to achieve economic well-being. Participation rates in education, training or employment at ages 16 and 17 remain high and are above the national average. Results in the General Certificate of Education and the Vocational Certificate of Education rose per student and per entry in 2005 and are in line with the national average and with similar authorities. Post-16 provision in the secondary and special schools inspected since September 2005 is good. The council has an effective system for reviewing the quality of provision which led to the closure of one sixth form. A high proportion of pupils in special schools were entered for one or more entry level qualification, based on increasing flexibility of provision. A review of transport arrangements has led to a reorganisation which allows greater independence, where appropriate, for students with LDD.

The council has enabled the establishment of consortia to coordinate 14–19 provision in each area. Good links with the Learning and Skills Council has led to an increase in provision of Level 1 and 2 courses, as well as a course on basic skills for life to encourage more young people to undertake education or training. Effective advice is given to pupils about future options in terms of further education and training via the Connexions service. The number of work-based learning places is lower than available nationally, reflecting local aspirations for higher level qualifications. Issues from the 2005 APA letter have been addressed but the council recognises that vocational provision needs to be further enhanced. In some areas 14-19 year olds have access to many choices and opportunities while in others their options are limited.

Regeneration projects are focusing on building up basic skills. The performance of the council relating to the employment, training and education opportunities for care leavers continues to be very good and better than in similar authorities. Older care leavers are well supported and have decent housing in line with similar authorities. Around 70% of young offenders, supported by four specialist workers including two personal advisers from Connexions, are involved in full time education, training and employment. Checks are undertaken to ensure that almost all young offenders are living in satisfactory accommodation.

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

The strategic planning and management of the authority are good, building on its drive for excellence overall which was achieved in 2005 through its comprehensive performance assessment rating. The council has led in the development of a shared vision and ambitious outcomes. The early links between education, social care and health services are being consolidated via local area agreements. The council and its partners have a wide range of specific preventative services. Changes to membership of the Surrey partnership, its governance and support arrangements made in 2005 have strengthened cooperative working. The council has good capacity to improve further.

A comprehensive needs analysis was conducted providing a firm base for developing priorities. The eight priorities have been identified in the CYPP through widespread and effective consultation, including 15 community based workshops attended by over 1,000 stakeholders including children and young people, as well as parents and carers. The priorities are relevant, clearly expressed and shared by the partnership. Areas of under-provision in services have been identified and are being addressed, such as support services for parents and access to early intervention for children with emotional and mental health needs. Particular attention is being paid to improving outcomes for vulnerable groups, building on the effective support of traveller pupils.

The new directorate of families, responsible for adult social care and all children’s services, has been designed to provide a seamless service. A permanent director is about to take up his post following a period with an acting director. This recent restructuring into a single directorate, together with budget cuts, and new managers in key posts mean that it is too early to judge the effects.

Current funding for education is above similar authorities, but lower than neighbouring boroughs in London, where area costs are more comparable with Surrey. The council faces financial pressures which may impact on future developments but it believes that its current action on budgets is a realistic long-term strategy to ensure that key priorities are maintained. For example there are additional funds to schools in areas showing low prior attainment and for the preventive schemes such as Families First. Voluntary and community participation in commissioning arrangements, both nationally and locally, is being enhanced. Overall recruitment and retention have improved slightly and training expenditure has increased for children’s social care.

Eleven local committees scrutinise performance on a locality basis. Performance indicators and targets are used to monitor progress and the projected improvements are usually challenging. The intention to close the gap in outcomes for vulnerable children is being met, albeit rather slowly in some cases. Whilst there are improvements in a number of indicators, the council’s performance with respect to social care remains adequate.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multi-agency working • good performance on reducing teenage pregnancies • very good performance in addressing health care needs of looked after children. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent of the Healthy Schools initiative.

<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> targeted recruitment leading to more black and minority ethnic carers preventative service which has diverted a high proportion of children from the care system permanency support team for 0-11 overall very good stability of placements for looked after children. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the effectiveness of response to social care referrals improve the stability of placements for long-term fostered children reduce the reliance on children's homes for looked after children improve the quality of the council's own fostering service
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Stage 1-4 attainment over half the cohort attaining five or more higher grades at GCSE including English and mathematics no schools below floor target at GCSE achievement of traveller pupils robust action to improve schools in a category of concern. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contextual value added during Key Stage 4 attainment of looked after children in comparison with their peers provision for permanently excluded pupils systems for identifying weaknesses in primary schools.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> impact of young people determining priorities in CYPP. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participation of looked after children in reviews.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> good participation rates in education, employment and training at ages 16 and 17 increased proportion of looked after children continuing with education. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase provision of vocational courses across the authority.
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> good standards maintained in education productive partnerships and stronger cooperative working. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> action to ensure new structures and budgets do not affect quality adversely aspects of social care provision.

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

- Action to ensure new structures and budgets do not affect quality adversely.
- Attainment of looked after children in comparison with their peers.
- Reduction in number of children in residential care.
- Vocational provision across the authority.
- Social care provision.

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 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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