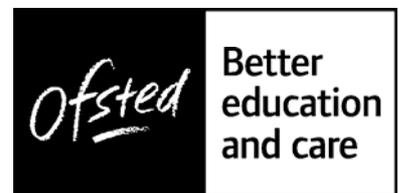


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Mr R Wolfson
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1 December 2005

Dear Mr Wolfson

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 20 July to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your 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.

Being healthy

Overall the outcomes and provision are satisfactory. There are good outcomes for most children but there are shortfalls in meeting the health needs of looked after children. A number of initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles in schools are supported by a good partnership between the school health team and the health promotion service. An increasing number of schools are seeking accreditation for healthy schools status. There is a considerable emphasis on offering opportunities to children and young people for physical activity outside school through sports partnerships, annual youth games events and employment of community sports coaches. Pupils' participation in sport and extra-curricular activities is good or better in the majority of schools. Through effective partnership with the voluntary sector, the number of disabled children taking part in youth activities has doubled. Different health partners work together to offer guidance to schools on tackling issues such as smoking and substance misuse. Reasonable progress has been made in reducing the incidence of teenage pregnancy, which is low in comparison with similar councils.

Effective action has been taken to promote the mental health needs of children and young people. The number of social workers in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has increased from 2002 to 2004. Since April 2003, the Youth Offending Team has been well above the national average with its timely referral of juveniles to the service. Within social care, there is now a single point of access

through four Senior Practitioners to specialist CAMHS services. This 'triage' system led to a 60% reduction in such referrals between January and May 2005.

The health needs of looked after children are not well met in comparison with similar councils and when compared with other councils in the South West. Where there is a designated nurse post, in South Wiltshire, arrangements are beneficial. The current outcomes for children being looked after are not consistent with the aims of the 'Healthier Wiltshire' project.

An extensive range of partnerships is in place in relation to health issues.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory but with some exceptions. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a named qualified social worker and all children on the register are reviewed at the required intervals. Since 2001, all children looked after have had a qualified social worker.

Indicators relating to the 'front end' duty system are weak. More than a third of referrals were re-referrals, that is, within twelve months of a previous referral. This is much higher than almost all similar councils. In addition, only a third of referrals of children in need led to an initial assessment. The average number of cases held on duty during the survey week was 56. The council state that this difficulty was mainly attributable to one area office. Nevertheless, it would appear that duty systems across the county have been experiencing difficulties in responding to incoming work.

In terms of quality assurance, only 8% of open case files were audited in the year and this was mainly auditing of child protection case records by senior managers.

The following issues of placement policy and implementation need to receive consistent management attention. Over 18% of all looked after children were placed in residential accommodation. This has been a rising trend since 2000-2001 when the percentage was half of this. The use of kinship care is low; the rate was less than half the average of similar councils. Wiltshire has a high proportion of under-10s placed with parents and a lower proportion of this age group placed for adoption than most similar councils. There has been a steep decline in the percentage of children adopted during the year who were placed for adoption within twelve months of the decision being made that this was in their best interests. There are few foster carers from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

The previous placement policy of appropriately placing 'in-house' and containing costs is no longer effective. Investment has been switched to placement services and away from family support. Foster care allowances have recently been raised to the nationally recommended level. Through contracts with independent fostering agencies, the

council is looking to secure thirty further placements within the county over the next three years.

In both the short term and from a longer term perspective, children are relatively stable in placement. There is an established children's rights service and an independent visiting service. One Serious Case Review has been carried out in 2004-2005. A local Child Safeguarding Board has been established. A Safer Parenting Handbook has been published and distributed widely. This gives practical advice and contacts for parents.

All the schools have policies and procedures in place for dealing with bullying and reporting racist incidents. Whilst reporting and recording has been encouraged, the incidence of racist incidents in schools has gone down over the last three years. An audit of Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks of staff shows a high level of compliance. Complaints about staff working with children are monitored and appropriately followed up. All outdoor and off-site activities are assessed for risk to ensure children's safety. The council has appointed a schools adviser with responsibility for training and providing guidance to schools on child protection and safety.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory for most pupils but should be improved for the more vulnerable groups. There has been a substantial increase in childcare provision over the last two years and further expansion is planned. The good teaching in nurseries helps the children to achieve early learning goals. However, of the child care settings inspected, a high proportion of day care settings and childminders were issued with action to improve.

Standards of attainment in 2004 for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are in line with the national average but remain below the comparator group. Standards are not high enough for the more able pupils and too few achieve the higher levels expected of their age group. Provisional data show that in 2005 at Key Stage 2 test results in English have risen by 2% and in mathematics by 3%. 2004 performance improves at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to above the national average and compares well with the comparator group. However, the substantial underachievement of Black/Black British pupils in English is of concern as is that of boys generally. Overall pupils make very good progress between Key Stages 2 and 4, although the rate is slower between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The results for pupils gaining the higher GCSE grades A*-C are in the top quartile nationally. The council is rightly proud of its pupils' achievements but recognises that this static position needs to be challenged and improved further.

Children and young people have access to a range of enrichment activities. Good partnership between the statutory and voluntary services provides extensive opportunities for arts, sport and out of school activities. School inspection evidence shows that most pupils in primary schools have positive attitudes towards learning but the attitudes of secondary school aged pupils is not as consistent. The special educational needs (SEN) strategy, which includes the special schools, was launched eighteen months ago and the council recognises the need to further develop strategies and services for children with disabilities. A team of personal advisers has been appointed to mentor and improve the outcomes for the more vulnerable young people.

Attendance in primary and secondary schools has improved, and is above the national average. Targeted support of schools with the lowest attendance has proved effective. Despite targeted work to keep young people with challenging behaviour in schools, the number of exclusions has not declined. Effective arrangements are made to support the education of children who do not attend schools through specialist services such as the Young People's Support Service.

Support for schools causing concern is good. Two schools no longer require special measures and have improved within a shorter time scale than expected. The council displays a sense of urgency to improve performance consistently across all its schools, particularly in the primary phase. Amongst the strategies used, an effective implementation of the national intervention programmes aimed at schools causing concern and the council's restructuring of its three-tier system have made a positive impact on improving schools.

A dedicated service supports the educational needs of looked after children. However, the attendance and attainment of pupils in this group is low in comparison to all pupils in Wiltshire. Following two years of some improvement, there has been an increase in absence from school amongst this group. Thirteen per cent of looked after children missed school for more than 25 days during last year. The number of looked after pupils who sat one or more GCSEs was low, with just over half the eligible year 11 pupils entered for examinations. The attainment of looked after children and care leavers is low in comparison with the majority of similar councils. For children looked after for 12 months or more at Key Stage 4 the gap in attainment with their peers is wide. The council is taking steps to raise the attainment of looked after children and, as part of this, it intends to trial a new model of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in the next academic year.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are generally good. A significant number of schools have school councils and encourage their children to become involved in decision making as part of citizenship education. Over 98% of early years settings inspected are good at developing children's personal and social skills. In 85% of the primary schools, pupils' social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development is promoted successfully and bullying is prevented. The council has identified support for improving outcomes in this respect in the secondary schools as a priority in the coming year.

Transition at different stages of children's education is supported through specific initiatives and particular attention is paid to children in need of additional support.

Compared with similar councils, there is a much higher uptake of direct payments for carers of disabled children and by 16-17 year old disabled young people. Approximately 350 young carers participated in support groups, activities and residential breaks in the last year.

There has been a steady reduction, since 2000-2001, in offending behaviour by looked after children. This compares relatively well with final warnings and convictions for all children 10+ within the Police force area. Wiltshire has used mentoring, remand fostering and a restorative justice approach in its residential children's homes to achieve these outcomes. The recent inspection of the youth offending service was successful and acknowledged their good practice in working with young people.

The council prides itself on the efforts taken to consult with young people and seek their views. There is a successful Wiltshire Assembly of Youth. The Children and Young People's Interim Trust Board has commissioned work to develop an overall strategy on 'voice and influence'. Looked after children and their carers are consulted on procedures and provision.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are generally good. Participation in education and training post-16 has increased because of the expansion in the number of courses. The council plans further growth as part of its new 14-19 strategy. Attendance at Vocational Learning Centres has encouraged more young people to continue in some form of learning after completing year 11. The proportion of young people with no qualifications at age 16 has reduced and is below the national average. However, the council plans to address the considerable area differences through its 14-19 strategy.

The specific needs of vulnerable groups are addressed through a number of initiatives. Use is made of the post-16 grant to enable participation of those in financial hardship, the identification of diversity pathways for disabled young people and a planned

reduction in the number of 16 and 17 year olds living in unsuitable accommodation. The council is working with District Councils and housing providers to achieve this.

Pupils from minority ethnic groups receive additional support from the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) service to help them to improve their examination results and to progress to further and higher education. Monitoring of progress and outcomes for children with special educational needs has recently been introduced as part of the council's strategy for special needs. It is intended that the next self-assessment should helpfully map progress against identified outcomes.

The Youth Offending Team has achieved the Youth Justice Board's target of 90% of all young people being in full time education, employment or training by the end of their intervention. Care leavers also did comparatively well, falling just short of the 'top band' performance of 60%, which is the figure planned by the council for 2005-2006.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the promotion of healthy life styles for children and young people • promoting children and young people's mental health. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessing and meeting the health needs of looked after children.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is effective allocation and review of children on the child protection register. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the difficulties social care duty systems have had in responding to incoming work • the shortcomings in achieving more appropriate placements for looked after children.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for schools in Ofsted categories of concern • children and young people have access to a range of arts, sport and out of school activities. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the attendance and attainment of looked after children • the achievement of vulnerable groups, for example, Black/ Black British pupils.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transition at different stages of education is well supported • there has been a steady reduction in offending behaviour by looked after children • disabled young people are encouraged to take control of their own circumstances through the direct payments scheme • there are positive efforts to seek the views of young people and consult with them. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the promotion of social, moral spiritual and cultural development and the prevention of bullying in secondary schools.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation in education and training post 16 has increased • both care leavers and young people supervised by the Youth Offending Team had good rates of participation in education, training and employment • a good quality service is provided by the Youth Offending Team. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p>

Service management

The self-assessment demonstrates good levels of partnership work.

Although vacancies for social care staff are average in number, turnover has been higher than in any similar council. The vacancy rate for teachers is low but again turnover is comparatively high. As a response to these issues, the council will be establishing a revised head of staff development post, covering all children's workforce issues, by December 2005.

Seven priority areas have been identified for the education part of the service. These accurately reflect the council's analysis of performance data and inspection outcomes.

In 2004-2005 social care services for children and families overspent by £1.8 million, largely due to expenditure on out of county placements for children. There are high agency placement costs, much above the England average. There has been a rapid 96% increase in these costs in the last five years. The personal social services budget per child population, although it has grown by almost 50% in the last five years, is still the second lowest amongst comparable councils. Expenditure on family support is now about half of what similar councils spend.

Planned improvements in ICT and the establishment of practitioner input from front line teams is intended to ensure that information held across a range of databases can be used more effectively.

The council has been a forerunner in adopting the role of Director of Children's Services but more needs to be done to clarify with schools the importance of their role in exercising leadership for the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. In this context it is of note that one of the ten primary school networks in the county is developing a 'kite mark' for a school's journey towards enabling children to achieve the five outcomes.

Good progress is being made in moving to the integrated children's services as required. There is a well-established ethos of partnership work across agencies and services and services are being co-located and integrated in an evolutionary fashion. The interim children's trust is providing a framework for strategic planning. The child care strategy needs to focus on improving outcomes for all children and young people, and particularly those in the most vulnerable groups. While the capacity in education is good, demonstrated by the improvements in outcomes for some aspects of the service, capacity for social care is less secure.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Looked after children's health needs are addressed:

- the extension of a designated nurse service for looked after children across the county.

Staying safe

Agencies collaborate to safeguard children according to the requirements of current government guidance:

Looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:

- effectiveness of social care procedures, specifically the duty system
- effectiveness of the placement policy for children looked after and the outcomes for these children and young people in social care placements.

Enjoying and achieving

Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:

- the attainment of vulnerable groups, specifically the attendance and attainment of looked after children and the attainment of black Caribbean pupils.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives:

- secondary school provision and outcomes for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, including the prevention of bullying.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Wiltshire County Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	2
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
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 capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

1

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate