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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Mr Paul Greenhalgh  
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**01 November 2006**

Dear Mr Greenhalgh

## **2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 Annual Performance Assessment 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**

<b>Areas for judgement</b>	<b>Grade awarded<sup>1</sup></b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	2
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people.	2
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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<b>Grade</b>	<b>Service descriptors</b>	<b>Capacity to improve descriptors</b>
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

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council delivers only minimum requirements for children and young people. The council has made some progress in a range of services and is aware of the areas for development it needs to address. The council now has a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) that identifies the key priorities for further improvement, and engages a range of partners and stakeholders to aid its delivery. The Corporate Plan further supports this. The council has restructured and in the past year a number of key permanent appointments have been made to support the delivery and management of services. These are important developments but are not yet fully realised. The authority's capacity to improve its services further is adequate.

## **Being healthy**

The contribution of the council to outcomes in this area is adequate with some strengths. Good progress has been made in promoting healthy lifestyles through the healthy schools standard; almost all targeted schools have already achieved the award. The proportion of children accessing at least two hours of physical education (PE) and sport per week has improved significantly. In most primary schools a body care programme has been operating and those children who have participated report feeling healthier and enjoy doing more exercise. A school based health service has been piloted. This has focussed on a good range of health issues including contraception, emotional health and eating disorders which is enabling learners to be more healthy. Two well-established school sports partnerships help schools to provide a wide range of sport and recreational activities that encourage children to lead healthy lifestyles.

The teenage pregnancy plan is good and the reduction in teenage pregnancies exceeds that of similar councils and the England average. Less progress has been made in immunising under two's against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR). Rates are below the national average mainly because the take up by parents is declining, but the council continues to try to raise awareness of the importance of immunisation. A programme to support the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) is established within the borough which is helping to reduce the number of children excluded from school. All juveniles with mental health needs are assessed within the statutory timescales and all referrals are seen within at least 13 weeks, many are seen within nine weeks. The council is less effective in assessing young people with identified substance misuse needs; whilst the number of young people who are accessing specific young people's services is above the regional average, the proportion who are in treatment is below that of the regional average. Although still good, the number of looked after children receiving annual healthcare checks has decreased. Training has been provided to foster carers to support these children and the council is seeking further improvements in this area.

## **Staying safe**

The contribution of the council to outcomes in this area is adequate but with some key areas for improvement. A Local Children's Safeguarding Board that includes representatives from a range of partner organisations and neighbouring authorities has initiated some improvements in child protection procedures. A further improvement is the publication of Safe Parenting Handbook provided for all parents, this information is also

available on the council website along with additional guidance for young people on staying safe. With the exception of the one special school, all schools inspected last year were judged to be at least satisfactory in ensuring learners stay safe. Anti-bullying strategies, including an anti-domestic violence week is having a positive impact on reducing the number of reported bullying or racist incidents, and fewer exclusions as a result of bullying. These good initiatives are helping young people to combat bullying.

In over fifty percent of schools, multi-agency clusters of key professionals are working together to provide an integrated, speedier response to families who require the support of more than one service. These arrangements, and the adoption of an improved universal referral form, are leading to a reduction in the referrals of children in need, and a better response to those who have had an initial assessment. The proportion of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) is now in line with similar authorities. All reviews of children on the CPR are now held on time which is an improvement on last year. However, the percentage of initial assessments completed within seven days and the percentage of core assessments completed within 35 days has declined and is inadequate.

The number of long-term looked after children is reducing but there has been a decline in the stability of placements for these children and this is now inadequate. A higher proportion of children are adopted within recommended timescales, but the number of adoptions remains well below expected standards. Satisfactory progress has been made in reducing the number of children who are living in residential placements and in increasing the number of children in foster placements. There has been a net gain of two foster families over the past year, and the implementation of the new fostering strategy is helping to promote increasing local interest in fostering. The percentage of children who have had three or more placements during a year remains very good, although not as good as last year.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The contribution of the council in this area is adequate. Good early years provision ensures the good start children make is continued into Key Stage 1 where results have been consistently above the national average for several years. Standards in Key Stage 2 are broadly average but achievement in English, in particular boys' writing, is not as high as it could be. The council is aware of this weakness and is now making much better use of school performance data to direct intensive support towards under-achieving schools. It is encouraging school leaders to interpret their own performance data and use this information to inform their own self-evaluation and identify areas for improvement. Effective intervention in a small number of targeted schools has led to an improvement in English and mathematics results in 2005, and a higher number of schools are attaining minimum floor targets. The rate of improvement in those schools who received targeted support was higher than that achieved by all schools nationally. In Key Stages 3 and 4 standards are above the national average, however, results do not reflect the variation in performance between selective grammar and non-selective schools. A small but significant proportion of Key Stage 3 pupils do not achieve what they are capable of in some schools. To correct this, the council's school improvement service is working with these schools to analyse performance data and provide additional support for pupils and teachers, which has led to a slight improvement in targeted schools.

GCSE average points score is well above average and an increased number of schools attained minimum floor targets last year. Despite this, a significant proportion of Key Stage 4 pupils in some schools did not build on what they achieved in Year 6 and go on to achieve 5 or more GCSE A to C grades in year 11. The number of pupils achieving one or more GCSE A to G grades has improved recently but this continues to fluctuate. The number of looked after children achieving five or more GCSE A to C grades remains below average but the proportion leaving school with at least one GCSE A to G grade has improved.

Enjoyment of school is satisfactory or better in almost all schools inspected since last year. Attendance is broadly average; progress has been made in reducing the number of authorised absences in primary schools but the proportion of unauthorised absences in secondary schools is above the national average and those of similar councils. Appropriate action is being taken to tackle a hard core of persistent truants. The council recognises the link between below average attendance and the relatively low number of pupils achieving the minimum number of GCSE qualifications, particularly in two secondary schools identified through inspection as schools of concern. It is coordinating the development of behaviour improvement strategies to help to improve pupils' behaviour in selected secondary schools and overall, fewer pupils are being excluded but exclusion rates remain above the national rate. The provision made for permanently excluded pupils is inadequate because the hours of teaching they receive has been significantly reduced.

Better partnership working with a neighbouring local authority is helping to ensure parental choice of schools is improving; most parents receive their first choice of primary school and an increasing number of parents have a broader choice of secondary school. The number of surplus places in secondary schools is above national figures, however this figure will reduce in the near future as most surplus places exist in one school which is due to close and re-open as a Trust school in 2007.

Support for those schools placed in a formal category of concern by Ofsted is satisfactory. The council has taken radical action to resolve the persistent issues remaining in two secondary schools. The school improvement service is now better equipped to provide the four schools issued with a notice to improve with coordinated consultancy to raise achievement and improve the quality of provision. Its effective use of school recovery panels allows improvement officers and consultants to intervene much earlier in those schools deemed to require immediate improvement.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The contribution of the council to outcomes in this area is adequate with some strengths. A Youth Council has been established with 60 regular attendees, and representation from most schools. It has influenced the priorities within the CYPP, for example improving safety. Youth Council members participate in the Essex Policing Strategy Group, taking part in campaigns and shadowing police officers. The Youth Council is producing an excellent DVD aimed at raising awareness of involving young people in decision-making. All schools have some form of school council.

The rate of re-offending has increased on the previous year but is below that of similar councils and the national average. There has been some good, targeted early intervention with those at risk of offending. Of the 126 young people and families using this service in the past year only eight have entered the youth justice system. A pilot family support project has also had a similar positive impact, working with 58 families to establish acceptable behaviours and learn new parenting skills. The numbers of looked after children issued with a final warning, reprimand or conviction is reducing and is now at an acceptable level. Peer mentoring, including support for young carers, provided through the voluntary sector is available, as well as mentoring through the Youth Offending Team (YOT). Support groups are provided for young carers but participation is low.

A wide range of information is provided to all looked after children about advocacy services and any young person can refer themselves or be referred by others. Sixty-four young people used the service last year, and of those, 11 were supported to make complaints. The number of young people who participated in their reviews was not as good as last year but remains acceptable. Fewer children with disabilities have a transition plan compared with last year but the council's focus has been on ensuring those plans in place are meaningful and of a higher quality. Good progress has been in developing corporate parenting, and as a result of workshops, a corporate parenting group has been established.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

The contribution of the council in this area is adequate with some strengths. Improved partnership working is enhancing the range of vocational opportunities in schools in Key Stages 4 and 5. Integrated planning between the council and the connexions service means that the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is less than that found elsewhere. An increasing number of schools are accessing alternative curriculum arrangements that include work-based learning provided by a range of different partner organisations. However, the proportion of looked after children entering employment or training is well below the national average.

Post-sixteen staying on rates and the standards achieved in advanced GCE and VCE courses are higher than the national average. Action has been taken to increase the number and range of level 1 and 2 courses for 16–19 year olds although some scope remains to extend this further. Greater collaboration between the council, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), schools and other neighbouring local authorities is helping to develop a coherent 14-19 strategy that is closer to meeting the needs of all learners in the borough. Effective partnership working ensures most eighteen-year-olds in care have pathway plans. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with an enhanced level of guidance and advice in obtaining post-sixteen work placements from a specialist adviser within the Connexions service. The council has facilitated some innovative work with two special schools and an adult community learning college to ease the transfer of young people from education to employment.

There is a good range of childcare provision. A fourth children's centre has been completed with plans to develop four more in the near future to provide care, guidance and support for children and families, training for parents, volunteers and for lifelong

learners. The council is committed to developing locally based multi-professional teams in key locations to ensure their impact is fully maximised. An executive nurse appointment within the council is helping to coordinate the work of health, social services and education to provide care and support for young people with diverse needs.

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

There is effective and improving leadership and management of services to children. The council has recently made several key appointments to build its capacity to help it improve further, and has developed a strong corporate vision for children and young people’s services in the Borough. It has shared its ambitions and generated full support from its partners; very positive views were expressed by one primary headteacher representative during the visit. Decisive action has been taken to resolve long-standing issues regarding the under-performance of two secondary schools; one will open as a fresh start school this year and the other will become one of the first Trust schools from September 2007.

The council delivers only minimum requirements for children and young people but has positioned itself to improve on this and make improvements to a range of services. It has committed itself to providing adequate funding to deliver these improvements even within a climate of financial restraint. The CYPP prioritises where improvements are needed and how they will be achieved. The council has taken significant steps towards greater integration of its services in order to maximise the use of resources and overall impact. More sophisticated monitoring procedures and scrutiny panels are in place to make service leaders fully accountable for the progress of the plan. Satisfactory progress made on the issues raised in the 2005 Annual Performance Assessment.

The council has adequate capacity to make further improvements to the services it provides for children and young people.

**Key strengths and areas for improvement**

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of schools achieving the healthy schools standard</li> <li>declining teenage pregnancy rates</li> <li>the impact of the SEAL programme on reducing exclusions.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the health of looked after children</li> <li>immunisation rates</li> <li>help for young people with identified substance misuse needs.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>positive action taken to reduce bullying</li> <li>improved partnership working.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the adoption service</li> <li>timescales for completing initial and core assessments</li> <li>placement stability for looked after children.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the use of school performance data</li> <li>rising standards overall in all key stages</li> <li>the use of school recovery panels to raise achievement.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>under-achievement of some pupils</li> <li>high unauthorised absence and exclusion rates in some secondary schools</li> <li>the number of hours of education allocated to permanently excluded pupils.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Youth Council, particularly the production of the DVD</li> <li>the early intervention service provided by the YOT.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>re-offending rates</li> <li>the number of young carers accessing support services</li> <li>transition plans for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of 19 year olds achieving level 1 and 2 qualifications</li> <li>the innovative work done in easing the transition from education to employment for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number and range of level 1 and 2 courses for all 16–19 year olds.</li> </ul>

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

### Being healthy

- The number of children vaccinated against MMR.
- Help for young people with identified substance misuse needs.

### Staying safe

- Initial and core assessments.
- The quality of care provided for adopted children and those who are looked after.

### Enjoying and achieving

- The progress made by all pupils during Key Stages 3 and 4, including looked after children.
- Monitoring of school attendance and exclusion rates and the level of provision for those who are permanently excluded.
- The number of surplus places in secondary schools.
- The impact of monitoring and support for those schools with a notice to improve.

### Making a positive contribution

- Re-offending rates.
- Support for young carers.

### **Achieving economic well being**

- The number and range of level 1 and 2 courses for all 16–19 year olds.

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



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