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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Mr Clive Webster  
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Civic Centre  
Southampton  
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**1 November 2006**

Dear Mr Webster

## **2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTHAMPTON CITY 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**

<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.	<b>3</b>
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	<b>3</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	<b>3</b>

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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

The overall contribution of the local authority's services to improving and maintaining outcomes for children and young people is good. Although some rates of increase are small compared to the national picture, the upward trend in many areas shows evidence of good progress which at times exceeds that of the authority's statistical neighbours. There is particularly good multi-agency working which is helping to promote healthier life styles. However, the number of core assessments to assess the needs of children, although increasing, remains too low; furthermore, the timeliness of reviews for looked after children requires improvement.

The local authority's performance in enabling children and young people to make a positive contribution is excellent. There is also a good range of initiatives to promote personal safety awareness.

There are good levels of attainment at Key Stage 4 in the school with a sixth form and in some of the 11–16 schools. Children and young people achieve particularly well in music and physical education. However, standards overall remain broadly below national averages even though pupils are making satisfactory progress from low starting points in many cases. Despite the recent progress in levels of attendance, these are still too low in primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, the number of young people not in education, employment or training is still too high.

The local authority has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and has clear and shared priorities for improvement. It has a good capacity to improve its services further.

## **Being healthy**

The quality of the local authority's services in this area is good. The national targets set for the health of children and young people have been met in most areas and exceeded in some. Multi-agency working is very successful in promoting healthy lifestyles, underpinned by the multi-agency parenting and family support strategy which focuses on preventative work. Joint working is having an impact on some services, for example, improvements are evident in the reduction in the number of teenage conceptions and an increase in breast feeding rates. Although the rates of increase are minimal compared to the national picture, the trend is an improving one. All schools are compliant in terms of sex and relationship education.

The local authority and partners have developed an obesity strategy and are in the process of collating baseline data for analysis. Almost all children benefit from the healthy schools programme, with the majority of Southampton schools having increased participation in physical activity from one hour to at least two hours per week. Health promotion is managed well. There is a child health promotion group whose areas of responsibility include immunisation. There is also a wider child and family management group which coordinates other outcomes including hospital admissions. All of this has had a positive impact in a number of areas. There has been an increase in immunisation and screening for almost all children, a reduction in hospital admissions for children suffering

from asthma, as well as improvements in following up all children who have attended accident and emergency.

Protocols and partnership working are in place with fully comprehensive mental health services across all areas, including 24-hour cover. The majority of schools have school counsellors and there is good mental health awareness training in all secondary schools. An independent evaluation of services provided by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) teams highlighted that parents and children reported improvements following intervention by CAMHS.

The work of a dedicated health team for looked after children is leading to improvements in the health of almost all looked after children. This has enabled the authority to meet its targets in this area and perform above the national average. The local authority's performance in checking the health needs of looked after children is very good. Inspections of care homes and fostering provision also showed that all standards relating to being healthy have been met or exceeded. All looked after children have mental health assessments and are referred to the appropriate services.

The authority has a full range of services available for CAMHS. Provision is very good in this area and further improvements are planned to increase the range of services for children and young people with learning disabilities.

## **Staying safe**

The contribution the local authority makes to ensuring children stay safe is good in most areas. The local authority has made good improvement in many areas with performance in some cases being higher than in similar authorities.

There are sound policies in place to safeguard children. Joint training about child protection has led to improvements in the way different agencies work together. This is leading to children spending less time on the Child Protection Register and fewer children than last year being registered. However, the rate of re-registrations on the Child Protection Register is higher than comparable authorities, and the local authority has not achieved the reduction that it planned.

Agencies are working together effectively to ensure parents and families are involved in the safeguarding process. As a result, the majority of parents now have a greater understanding of the reasons behind their child being part of a child protection conference.

There is a good range of joint initiatives which focus on child safety. These include home safety checks and a high profile campaign in schools against drugs and under age drinking, healthy food and hygiene. Partners are working effectively together to raise awareness of bullying. All schools have anti-bullying policies in place, with school inspection reports indicating that most primary school children are aware of their school's policy. Schools have provided good personal safety awareness training and travel plans for

children and young people. These have contributed to a significant decline in the number of road accidents.

Most looked after children have secure and stable placements with all children being allocated a qualified social worker. However, the local authority has not made the improvement in the long-term stability of fostered children that it planned to achieve. Effective multi-agency working is leading to a suitable reduction in the numbers of looked after children.

There are adequate systems in place to refer and assess children's needs. This has led to improvements in the timeliness of initial assessments; the local authority has improved well on its previous year's performance and is above its statistical neighbours but still below the national average. The local authority had planned to increase the number of core assessments for 2005/06 and has done so. However, despite the significant increase in core assessments compared to the previous year, the rate remains too low and is still below that of similar authorities. The local authority continues to believe that a factor is the thoroughness of its initial assessments. Nevertheless, the timeliness of core assessments has improved to a level of very good performance.

The timeliness of reviews for looked after children is significantly lower than the national average and requires improvement. There is an appropriate emphasis on reducing the number of children accommodated in residential care and this is leading to more children being fostered or placed for adoption than the national average. Fewer children were adopted during the year; however, the authority has exceeded national figures on the timeliness of placements once the best interest decision has been made. The findings from inspections of children's homes, fostering and adoption services were positive and highlight that most of the national minimum standards are being met in these settings.

Independent reviewing officers and the children's rights services ensure that children with disabilities are well supported and that they contribute to the planning and reviewing of the care they receive. Further participation is planned through the employment of a multi-agency transition worker. All children receiving respite care services are placed within twenty miles of their home.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The local authority's good work in this area has secured improvements in pupils' attainment at all stages of their education. Nevertheless, standards remain broadly below national averages. General attainment is in line with the local authority's statistical neighbours and most pupils are making at least satisfactory progress from a low starting point.

Support for early years education is managed effectively; play-based learning extends learning successfully into Key Stage 1. This is promoting good levels of continuity and progression, and contributing to the good progress made by pupils by the end of Year 2.

The achievement of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is broadly satisfactory. At Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress in science and mathematics and their attainment, although still below the national average, is above the comparator group for science and in line for mathematics. Although the local authority has met its target for English for 2005, the rate of progress has been slower than in other areas and boys are achieving significantly less well than girls in writing.

The achievement of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is satisfactory compared to the performance of statistical neighbours but remains below the national average. The attainment of pupils in the school with a sixth form is at least as good as the national average and above that of statistical neighbours.

Secondary schools are increasingly effective with 12 of the 14 secondary schools achieving specialist status. The percentage of care leavers with five or more A\* to C GCSEs or equivalent is good; it has increased significantly since 2004/05 and is well above the national average. The number of looked after children who sat and achieved at least one GCSE equivalent is in line with the national average. The local authority's detailed analysis of the performance of the relatively small numbers of pupils from black and minority ethnic groups shows that their overall average point scores are broadly in line with the national average.

The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are assessed promptly and statements of special educational needs are of good quality. As a result, the needs of most pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are successfully met and this enables them to enjoy learning and make sound progress. The local authority is undertaking an internal review to further improve the targeting of resources in this area.

The local authority's strategic planning of its provision is good overall. Two notable areas where provision and outcomes are excellent are sport and music, both of which make a very good contribution to the enjoyment and achievement of children and young people. The introduction of the school sports coordinator programme, as well as national developments, has led to a considerable increase in participation in sporting activity and physical recreation. The music service has been identified by Ofsted as very good with outstanding features. The service has won a National Music Council Award for six years running, and caters for a wide range of children.

There is a wide and flexible choice of early years' provision. This helps many parents to balance their children's needs, their work commitments and family life. Provision of childcare support and training for staff who work in early years is closely matched to need, and deprived areas are especially well served. The local authority has met and in some areas exceeded its targets for improving provision as well as providing training for early years.

The local authority makes effective use of data to determine future trends, for example, the need to reduce the number of surplus places. The local authority is consulting widely on this sensitive issue and is sharply focused on making the most efficient use of its resources while aiming for higher standards of achievement.

Fewer schools than last year are causing concern. One secondary school came out of special measures leaving one remaining school in this category; there is one school identified as having serious weaknesses and one school with a notice to improve.

Attendance levels, although improving, are still below the national average. The number of authorised and unauthorised absences is still too high. Recent changes introduced by the local authority demonstrate a more rigorous approach at all levels. As a result, the attendance of looked after children is well above the national average and that of similar authorities. There is also an improvement in the quality of support and guidance for schools. There are early signs of improvement in targeted schools, including the school recently removed from special measures, but this has yet to impact on the local authority's overall statistics.

There is a clearly defined and successful strategy for securing improvements to recreational, leisure and cultural facilities. This is based on a clear audit of needs and the identification of gaps in provision. As a result there is a very wide range of activities and support which reflect the authority's diversity. The number of children and young people involved has grown considerably; the percentage of disadvantaged young people accessing the available facilities has also increased following strategic targeting.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The local authority's performance in respect of this outcome is excellent. The authority has taken very good steps to promote the involvement of children in contributing their views to the decision-making process, including the authority's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).

All schools have school councils, which send representatives to the authority's youth parliament; this also has representation from black and minority ethnic children, children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Amongst other initiatives, the youth parliament has been involved in the development of the authority's effective anti-bullying strategy. Budget management has been devolved to some school councils with the youth parliament administering its own grants-award scheme. In addition, 1,500 young people voted by text in the election of the authority's UK youth member of parliament, a notable increase on last year's figure of 80.

Looked after children receive very good support for their emotional and social development. One initiative is an outdoor adventure scheme contracted by the authority. The scheme has been successful and has been extended to weekends, with young people being trained in leadership skills and some going to lead other looked after children the following year. The local authority's performance in involving looked after children in their reviews continues to be a significant strength and better than comparable authorities. The vast majority of children who have been fostered contribute to their own reviews. Helpful contact between these children and their families is also being encouraged.

Representatives from all relevant services are tackling anti-social behaviour effectively within the authority. Teams work across each neighbourhood to identify problems with individuals and take the necessary action. As a result the number of anti-social behaviour letters has been reduced by 15% since last year. There has been a small increase in the number of young people committing offences; however, the youth offending team has succeeded in moving most young people on to further education, employment or training and the rates of re-offending have reduced. The number of looked after children who have received final warnings, reprimands and convictions, although reduced and improving, is still at a higher level than national averages. The authority recognises that this is an area for improvement and is working together with representatives of Wessex youth offending team, as this problem is replicated in neighbouring authorities.

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

The quality of the local authority's work in this area is good and improving. Although the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is still too high, sound progress is being made in this area and more pupils are now going into employment or training or continuing with their education. The number of NEET has reduced significantly for vulnerable groups.

There are effective procedures to assess learning needs, which result in a relevant 14 to 19 curriculum for all groups, with well matched vocational options and a wide range of work placements, including for hard to place young people. The authority works well with the learning and skills council and Connexions service to ensure that young people have pertinent advice and guidance at all key transition points. Effective referral systems between agencies ensure that young people with complex needs also receive good advice. There is effective coordination between health, education and social services which results in well targeted action to meet the educational, personal and welfare needs of students.

The clear routes of progression at post-16 enable the great majority of young people in the 14 to 19 age range to participate in education or training of their choice and become confident and enterprising. There is good partnership working between schools and colleges and this has been successfully embedded through the 14 to 19 pathfinder project. This has also contributed to rising standards and improved staying on rates. Pathway and transition plans for vulnerable and other groups are monitored effectively and reviews are used to make improvements. Almost all young people contribute to their reviews and are positive about service provision and delivery. Transition to adult services is well coordinated and successful.

The local authority has made significant progress in supporting families and developing sustainable communities. There is a wide range of good childcare provision, with effective plans to develop this further. Access issues are addressed well, particularly for disadvantaged families and vulnerable children. Economic renewal programmes improve employment opportunities significantly. There are good plans to meet the housing needs of vulnerable groups and some impact is already evident.

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

The authority's capacity to improve is good. The leadership of children's services is at least good and sometimes very good. Services are fully staffed, with no significant vacancies. There are very good management systems in place; priorities are clearly established and widely shared. There are rigorous approaches to performance management which take account of feedback from customers and clients, and are directly linked to the authority's business-planning process. The local authority's priorities are based on a thorough analysis of needs which takes into account the views of parents, carers, children and young people. The local authority consults well especially with hard to reach, vulnerable and other groups of children and young people.

The senior management team maintains an effective overview of progress and development, and challenges underperformance. A good example is the cross-referencing of health performance indicators with information on performance in schools. A new Cabinet Member for Children's Services was designated in May 2005 and a new Director was appointed from August 2005. Since then, a streamlined senior management team has been introduced and includes senior managers from health, social care and education.

Partnership working is developing particularly well. There is a well established management structure with a network of subgroups involving a wide range of partners, including the voluntary sector, Connexions, schools and the police. These are all represented on the children and young people's strategic partnership. A Local Safeguarding Children Board was launched in May 2006 and an independent chair has been appointed. The board is working effectively in line with the new guidelines and has a wider partnership representation than the area Child Protection Committee it replaced. There are examples of very successful joint working across agencies and partnerships leading to effective outcomes, including Sure Start and Family Points, early years work and services working together to meet the most complex needs.

The level of financial resourcing has not increased significantly and the per capita budget for both children and families, and for youth services, is below that of the comparator group. Nevertheless, good levels of efficiency together with effective partnership working, strategic leadership and management, and forward planning are contributing well to improving the outcomes for children and young people while ensuring good value for money. The local authority makes informed choices about the balance of cost and quality. A good example is in the planning, commissioning and decommissioning services. Optimum use is made of joint commissioning and partnership working to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness of local services.

There are clear and shared priorities for improvement and collective ownership of the CYPP. The plan has been informed by a careful analysis of needs and has taken account of the views of all stakeholders, particularly children and young people. It provides a coherent approach to development and its priorities will form the basis of the local authority's local area agreement.



CYPP sets out clearly focused activities across the five outcome areas. However, the plan does not include sufficient information about quantifiable targets and those responsible for driving the plan forward, even though this information is available. Furthermore, even though the local authority has information about the mechanisms and frequency for reviewing progress these are not sufficiently explicit in the CYPP document.

## 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>• multi-agency working in promoting healthy lifestyles</li> <li>• focus on preventative work</li> <li>• increase in participation in physical activity.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce the rates of childhood obesity</li> <li>• further reduce the number of teenage conceptions.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sound child protection policies and protocols</li> <li>• preventative support services</li> <li>• reduced numbers of looked after children in residential care</li> <li>• higher numbers of children being fostered and in family placements</li> <li>• range of initiatives promoting personal safety awareness training for children in schools.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further improve the timeliness of reviews of looked after children</li> <li>• increase the numbers of core assessments.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for and range of early years education</li> <li>• particular success in music and physical education</li> <li>• inclusive strategy for securing improvement to recreational, leisure and cultural facilities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continue to raise standards in all key stages</li> <li>• continue to improve levels of attendance in primary and secondary schools.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• innovative ways of enabling children to contribute their views through participation in various groups</li> <li>• support for looked after children in their emotional and social development.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further reduce the number of final warnings, reprimands and convictions especially for looked after children.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective referral systems between agencies</li> <li>• well targeted action to identify personal and welfare needs of students</li> <li>• the basis for further development established through the 14 to 19 pathfinder project.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce the number of young people who are classified as NEET.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly focused CYPP</li> <li>• rigorous approach to management of performance</li> <li>• strategic focus on securing and improving value for money</li> <li>• effective joint commissioning</li> <li>• good partnership working</li> <li>• stable workforce with few vacancies.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure the CYPP includes quantifiable targets and that those responsible for driving the plan are identified</li> <li>• ensure the plan includes sufficient mechanisms for reviewing progress.</li> </ul>

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

- The timeliness of reviews of looked after children and the extent that numbers of core assessments have increased.
- To what extent have levels of attendance in primary and secondary schools improved.
- The rate of progress and standards in all key stages.
- The extent to which the authority is making continuous progress in reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training.

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's information only.

Yours sincerely



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