



Making Social Care
Better for People



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Mr Wolfson
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Dear Mr Wolfson

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WILTSHIRE 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 you and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded ¹
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

¹

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

Wiltshire County Council delivers above minimum requirements for children and young people and its contribution is good in four of the five outcomes assessed. Children's services overall are well led and demonstrate good capacity for improvement. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) takes good account of the views of children and young people and demonstrates good levels of partnership working. Services are becoming increasingly integrated. The pace of improvement in some aspects of social care is too slow. Most of the areas for improvement identified in last year's APA have been improved through well targeted action by the authority.

Being healthy

The authority makes a good contribution to improving the health of children and young people in the area.

Meeting the particular health needs of looked after children was a shortfall identified in last year's APA. There is now a designated nurse in each Primary Care Trust area. There is good promotion of the health of children and young people in foster care and in the residential respite unit for disabled children.

Most schools inspected are judged good at enabling learners to be healthy. Approximately three quarters provide two hours or more of physical activity for pupils each week. Performance in the number of schools achieving the Healthy Schools standard is improving. There has been active work with early years centres to help them participate in the Healthy Early Years Settings programme.

There has been good progress in reducing teenage conceptions. An effective young people's substance misuse service (FLUX) is located in the mental health partnership trust. Some cases have a very high level of need with mental health problems linked to substance abuse and FLUX works with other agencies to prevent long-term mental health problems amongst these young people.

Overall, the mental health needs of children and young people are promoted effectively. A comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) strategy needs to be finalised with partners once the new Primary Care Trust is fully configured. The CAMHS shortfalls are in: providing consistent 24-hour cover across the county; providing for 16- and 17 year-olds; and increasing involvement of the services in work with children with a learning disability.

Staying safe

Although the authority has good core services, there are some significant areas for improvement, particularly for looked after children. The authority makes an adequate contribution to ensuring the safety of children.

The authority has worked hard in the last year to improve its duty and assessment systems. The number of initial contacts has remained broadly the same for the last three years although these are no longer all classified as referrals. Commendably, the re-referral

rate has dropped from 30% to 17%. Ninety per cent of referrals have led to an initial assessment. Increasingly, these are completed within the prescribed timescale of seven days, although performance is still below average. Three quarters of core assessments are now completed within 35 working days and this is much improved. There are fewer locality teams which ensure each team has sufficient capacity, supported by staff from other agencies. Overall, this area of work has received consistent management attention this year and improvements have been made.

The child protection system is well run. All children on the Child Protection Register are allocated to a named, qualified social worker and their safety is reviewed at the required intervals. Although re-registrations have risen, they are still at acceptable levels. All looked after children also have a qualified social worker.

Just over three quarters of statutory reviews for looked after children were held on time. The authority is planning to increase this to 85% in 2006–2007. It is unacceptable that this target is less than 100%. In addition, only about three quarters of children contributed to their review last year. Again, the target for next year has been set at 85%. The authority maintains that a higher contribution rate will be achieved through the use of the Children's Rights Officer and use of the Viewpoint computer-based programme. Both these targets would merit re-examination as they reflect a lack of ambition for these children.

Adoption services are a cause for concern. Only 40% of children were placed for adoption within 12 months of the authority deciding that this was in their best interests. There has been a downward trend in this aspect of performance since 2003–2004, when the indicator stood at 86%. In addition, only 3.8% of looked after children were adopted this year, against a national target of 6%. A CSCI inspection of the service in December 2005 found that there was a reliance on traditional adopters self-referring and there were insufficient adopters to provide enough choice for children with a range of differing needs. The authority recognises that it has under invested in the service and that it needs to reconfigure it as a specialist adoption team.

The authority aims to improve the range of local placements for looked after children. Although changes are taking place, most children are still in the same placements. Many more young people are placed in residential accommodation and too many are placed more than 20 miles from home, in comparison with similar authorities. On the positive side, the proportion of children fostered by family and friends (kinship care) has doubled this year and is now one in 10 of the looked after population. Two of the authority's former children's homes are being put out to tender. This will take time to finalise but it is anticipated that it will result in more young people being placed locally. Firm targets need to be set for the proportion of placements sought with the authority's own foster carers and the future use of residential accommodation. This was an area for improvement in last year's APA.

There are many promising aspects of work with disabled children. The authority is a pathfinder for early years support to this group of children. The work of the special educational needs (SEN) statementing service and social care services is becoming more integrated. A development manager has been appointed to lead the establishment of

multi-professional teams. Ninety per cent of disabled children have a transition plan to adult care services at the age of 14. Outcomes for this group are good.

The authority has high unit costs for the placement of looked after children and is a very low spender on family support. The programme to establish 20 children's centres by 2008 has adequate corporate support.

Enjoying and achieving

The authority makes a good contribution to ensuring that children and young people achieve at school and enjoy their education and leisure activities.

The provision, and outcomes, for early years are good. The Foundation Stage profile shows scores above national averages. The authority has provided good support for parents to involve them in their children's education, through initiatives such as the Strong Children project and Enhance Children's Learning. The ethnic minority achievement and traveller education services are providing good support for 100 children under five from traveller and other minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key Stage 1 and 2 results in 2005 were in line with national averages although below those for statistical neighbours. The reorganisation of the school improvement service now ensures that all schools have a minimum of three days of adviser support annually. This, together with initiatives such as the Intensive Support and the Primary Leadership Programmes, is beginning to raise standards in primary schools. Boys' literacy, however, and in particular their standards in writing, is a key area for improvement in primary schools. The authority's policy of ending the three tier system and amalgamating infant and junior schools has led to improved Key Stage 2 results in the successor schools. The local authority has too many primary schools in categories of concern but support for these schools is effective. The authority is addressing weaknesses in its systems for identifying and supporting weaker schools through increased and more focused advisory support and improved support for schools in developing their self-evaluation.

Standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 in secondary schools are at least in line with, and often better than, statistical neighbours. At Key Stage 4, the DfES indicates that the results are in the top quartile for both five A* to C and 5 A* to G pass rates and no schools are below their floor targets. Secondary schools inspected had judgements of good or better for overall effectiveness, achievement and standards, leadership and management, teaching and learning, and curriculum. However, the achievement of looked after children remains a weakness, in that too few were able to sit national tests and public examinations. Against an overall picture of improving attendance, the attendance of looked after children is not high enough. The attainment and attendance of looked after children remain areas for improvement from the last APA. The authority has improved its provision for Black and minority ethnic children through the appointment of a strategy manager and an outreach worker. Robust and innovative approaches have been taken to monitor and support these pupils.

All permanently excluded pupils have 20 hours or more per week of alternative tuition and over 80% of supervised juveniles are in education, training or employment. Provision is good and performance exceeds national standards. Although fixed-term exclusions are high, the young people's support service is being effective in reducing the rate of exclusions.

The time taken to provide statutory statements has improved significantly as result of more effective management of the SEN service. The service is now seeking to reduce the high number of tribunals by developing closer links with schools, parents and other agencies.

Making a positive contribution

The authority effectively enables young people to make a positive contribution. There is a good range of mechanisms for young people, including those from most vulnerable groups, to be involved in decision making about services and to be involved in the local community. The views of young people are well incorporated in the CYPP.

Engagement of young people with the Youth Development Service (YDS) is above the national average. The authority is developing links between Connexions, YDS, and the Youth Offending Team (YOT) to better coordinate their provision. The strong work by the YOT has led to a decrease in offending by looked after young people over a number of years. The number of offences by looked after young people remains low despite a rise this year due to two group incidents. The YOT is expanding its work with young people and their families to reduce the risk of young people offending.

The number of direct payments to young disabled people or their carers has increased and continues to improve.

Inspection evidence indicates that there is strong provision in both primary and secondary schools to enable pupils to make a positive contribution.

Achieving economic well-being

The authority makes a good contribution to ensuring that children and young people achieve economic well-being and outcomes are good. There is strong and improving performance in those schools with sixth forms where GCE and VCE results exceed those of statistical neighbours and the national figures. Seventy-five per cent of 16 to 18 year olds stay in learning and this is continuing to increase. Inspections of secondary schools show that pupils are well prepared for working life.

The authority's 14–19 strategy is effective in improving provision for vocational education at levels 1 and 2. The authority is working with a college of further education, which is a key partner in the 14–19 strategy. Collaborative arrangements between schools and colleges are improving. This is extending the choices in education and training for 14–19 year olds. Arrangements for 14–19 provision have been developed according to local needs in different geographical areas of the authority. The development and

implementation of the 14-19 strategy are supported by effective liaison with the local Learning and Skills Council.

The number of 16 to 17 year olds in bed and breakfast and other unsuitable accommodation is too high, at 134. The authority has now employed an Accommodation Support Officer to work with district councils and housing providers to improve the quality of accommodation provided. Much has already been done to tackle this problem particularly for care leavers. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training is reducing and the proportion of teenage mothers in education, employment or training (EET) has improved through the work of the Connexions and Youth Development Services. The proportion of care leavers in EET is still too low. Social care links with the 14–19 strategy are not yet strong enough to help tackle this problem effectively.

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

The CYPP demonstrates good levels of partnership working. Two young people now sit on the Trust Board, which also includes parents and carers.

Wiltshire has had an integrated structure to manage children's services since 2003. The leading 25 managers of the services now have a good knowledge of need and solutions. However, there has been limited progress since last year in assessing the impact of authority's policies on promoting race equality for children. It has been advantageous to bring together SEN and disability services under common management. This has led the authority to recognise the need for a more coordinated service to provide support for some disabled children in school. Similarly, the YOS and the YDS are now under common management and have developed strong links to Connexions.

Out of authority social care placements continue to place cost pressures on the budget. The 2006–07 budget is based on improved knowledge and understanding of the factors likely to affect it in relation to care placements. In addition, there is now effective monthly monitoring of budget expenditure.

This well led directorate has achieved Investors in People status and has also become one of the 'Championing Children' pilot authorities for the DfES. There has been a high turnover of both teaching and social care staff again this year. In response, there is now a Head of Staff Development, covering all children's workforce issues. In practice, bringing together children's services has meant that the social care model of one-to-one supervision sessions to deal with performance management matters has spread effectively throughout the directorate.

Performance management has been most effective in the education service. Good progress is being made in improving schools' skills of self-evaluation. Results are continuing to improve. Progress in some areas, for example the attainment of looked after children, has been disappointing. In some other areas of social care, targets have been insufficiently ambitious. Now that performance management has been combined under

one manager across children's services, the authority is in a better position to tackle weaknesses in performance management and engender a more consistent approach. Capacity for further improvement has also been increased by establishing management posts to further integrate services for disabled children and to deal with the unsuitable accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds. While the capacity to improve in education is good, demonstrated by the improvements in performance that have been made, capacity in social care is 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"> • reduction in teenage conceptions • schools achieving the Healthy Schools standard • the health of looked after children • effective young people's substance misuse service. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with partners, the development of a comprehensive CAMHS multi-agency strategy.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision for disabled children • improvements to rates of assessment of children and families. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • range of local placements for looked after children • the adoption service • the contribution of looked after children to their reviews and the timeliness of those reviews.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision for children educated other than at school • provision and outcomes in early years • provision and outcomes in secondary schools. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • boys' literacy, especially writing • the attendance and attainment of looked after children • the proportion of primary schools made subject to a category of concern.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provision schools make to enable pupils to take part in making decisions • engagement of young people with the Youth Development Service • offending rates by looked after young people as a result of provision by the YOT • systems for gathering, and acting on, the views of young people 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct payments to young disabled people. 	
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving performance in schools with sixth forms • improved provision through the 14–19 strategy. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of 16 to 17 year olds in unsuitable accommodation • the proportion of care leavers in education training and employment.
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership • budget monitoring • increasing integration of services. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance management • target setting • impact of policies for race equality for children.

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

Being healthy

- Development, with partners, of a comprehensive multi-agency CAMHS strategy.

Staying safe

- Improvements in the range of local placements for looked after children.
- Effectiveness of the adoption service.
- Achievement of more challenging targets in carrying out the statutory reviews for looked after children.

Enjoying and achieving

- Standards of boys' literacy, especially writing.
- Improvements in the attendance and attainment of looked after children.
- Reducing the proportion of primary schools made subject to a category of concern

Achieving economic well being

- Reduction in the number of 16 to 17 year olds in unsuitable accommodation.
- Increasing the proportion of care leavers in education, training and employment.

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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