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Mrs Marion Davis
Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families
Warwickshire County Council
Children, Young People and Families Directorate
Saltisford Office Park
Ansell Way
Warwick
CV34 4UL

Dear Mrs Davis

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Warwickshire County Council 2008

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	4
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 3

Warwickshire County Council consistently delivers services for children and young people that consistently deliver above minimum requirements. Services for children and young people to achieve economic well-being are outstanding. The council’s capacity to improve, including its management of services, is good. The council has taken action to address the recommendations of the 2007 APA and has made good progress in a number of these areas. Partnerships with the health service are strong, although further work is needed to embed the new child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) arrangements. Safeguarding arrangements are good, but there are some inconsistencies in practice across the county. Educational attainment in most key stages has improved and is above national averages. The youth offending service has had some significant achievements but overall performance is only slightly above average and partners face a number of challenges, especially in respect of reducing the number of first time offenders.

Being healthy

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good support for expectant and new mothers resulting in improvement in breast-feeding rates. ▪ The proportion of looked after children who have regular health checks is high. ▪ There are high levels of satisfaction with the Integrated Disability Service.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whilst there is some good progress in relation to CAMHS, access is inconsistent and criteria for referral are not yet sufficiently clear to all users.

Staying safe

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preventative and family support services are well developed. Implementation of the common assessment framework is well advanced and used effectively. ▪ Anti-bullying provision in schools is outstanding.

- The Local Safeguarding Children Board is effective and good action is taken to ensure the incidence of abuse and neglect is minimised.
- Services for looked after children are very good. The recent inspection of foster care services judged all areas inspected to be outstanding. All children are allocated to a qualified social worker. The stability of placements is very good. The timeliness of reviews improved very significantly from 72% in 2006/07 to 94% in 2007/08.
- There are good arrangements for early identification of children whose needs would be best met by adoption including timely action and effective decision making. At 90% the proportion placed with adopters within 12 months of the initial decision exceeded similar areas at 73% and the national average at 76%.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- A higher proportion of children and young people are subject to a child protection plan than in similar areas and there was a high rate of re-registration.
- There are inconsistencies in response patterns to new referrals and completion of initial assessments.
- The proportion of new cases receiving a core assessment has increased but remains significantly below similar areas and the national average.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- Attainment in the Foundation Stage and at the end of Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 is above the national average. Rates of improvement in English at Key Stage 2 and in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 exceed the national average.
- Inclusive educational provision, some of which is outstanding, ensures that looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well.
- The local council has successfully reduced the number of schools in categories of concern.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Although attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 remains in line with similar councils and the national average, it dipped slightly from 2006 to 2007.
- The proportion of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are excluded from school is reducing but remains too high.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council can demonstrate outcomes to illustrate that it is implementing its vision of active engagement of young people in all aspects of the council's work. The breadth of this engagement is outstanding. Young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are playing a role in planning and reviewing services, staff appointments and other aspects of the council's activities. ▪ The council is good at resolving issues raised by children and young people at an early stage. Children, parents and carers have access to independent information, advice and support services directly and, as a result, there are very few formal complaints. The council has shown itself to be receptive to user feedback. ▪ The number of looked after children who take part in their statutory reviews has improved significantly at 99%. The proportion is now higher than similar areas at 92% and the national average of 91%. ▪ In 2006/07 the youth offending service reported successfully reduced re-offending of low level crimes, with a reduction in both the seriousness and frequency of offending, well above average for both similar councils and nationally. ▪ Final warnings and reprimands for looked after children have reduced and the level is now good.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of supervised young people who have offended who are in full time education, employment and training (EET) is significantly below similar areas and the national average. ▪ Advocacy arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who do not have their own key worker are inconsistent and do not meet all their needs.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good 14–19 curriculum with successful partnership working. ▪ Outstanding support for care leavers with highly effective pathway planning, a very high proportion of young people entering EET and a high percentage living in suitable accommodation. ▪ Good support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities leading to good achievement and good participation in work based learning. ▪ Effective interventions in local 'hotspots' to improve participation in EET. The success of these interventions can be seen in a reduction in the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and in the significant rise in the percentage of teenage mothers who are in EET.
Important weaknesses and areas for development

Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services

Grade 3

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good and its management of these services is good. Excellent strategic leadership with strong lead member support and good operational capacity ensure that the council is able to fulfil its challenging ambition. The children and young people's plan is based on a thorough needs analysis and has the views of children and young people at its heart. Good prioritisation alongside well-conceived commissioning and service strategies ensures that resources are well targeted to close gaps, for example in educational attainment. There is a clear focus on equality and diversity. The council has successfully addressed issues raised in the 2007 APA including a significant increase in the number of schools participating in the Healthy Schools Programme, reducing the numbers of referrals and repeat referrals to children's social care, reducing the number of schools in Ofsted categories of concern and increasing the proportion of young people in EET. However while good outcomes have been maintained in many areas, in others it is too soon to see a significant impact. For example, further work is needed to embed the new CAMHS arrangements and there are challenges in reducing the number of first-time offenders. In social care, there are weaknesses in some elements of quality assurance and some inconsistency in practice across the county including in the auditing of case files.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outstanding ambition and strategic leadership. ▪ Outstanding partnership working. ▪ Good prioritisation with a clear focus on equality and diversity.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Highly sophisticated electronic management system for the children and young people's plan with transparent, evidence-based quarterly reviews. |
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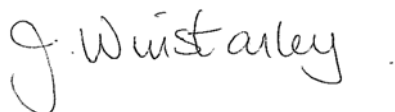
Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Performance management and the informed use of data are not yet comprehensive. |
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The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Yours sincerely



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection