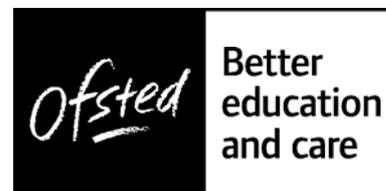


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
Email: edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Making Social Care
Better for People



Ms Elaine McHale - Corporate Director (Social Services and Health)
Ms Kitty Ferris - Head of Children's Services
Wakefield City Council
8 St John's North
Wakefield WF1 3QA

1 December 2005

Dear Colleagues

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF WAKEFIELD CITY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on Wednesday, 20 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your council. 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

Outcomes in this area are good and are particularly strong where healthy lifestyles and healthy schools are promoted through partnerships between health and education services such as the Healthy Schools initiative. The identification of the health needs of looked after children has improved with good plans for further improvement. A range of initiatives is in place that are delivering good outcomes for children and young people, for example, work in the Young Offenders Wing at Newhall Prison on tackling obesity. Although the under-18 conception rate has increased the council still expect to meet the National Health Service milestone of a 15% reduction. School inspection reports show that personal, social and health education in Wakefield schools is of good quality. Appropriate educational programs are available and accessible for all pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers of school age.

There has been an increase in the number of social workers employed by or working closely with Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) teams. However, there remain risks to service availability and quality from the impact of recruitment and retention difficulties. The council and its National Health Service partners are addressing this by setting up an extended comprehensive service beginning in September 2006. Whilst targets for young offenders to access non-acute services were not met in 2004/05, they have been met since April 2005.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are good. Children and young people are provided with a safe environment. The council's policies show good recognition of what constitutes a safe environment and their implementation is monitored consistently and rigorously, particularly in relation to children and young people with disabilities.

The number of children on the child protection register is stable and all children on the register are allocated a social worker. Child protection processes are robust and there are good joint procedures in the Young Offenders and Mother and Baby Wings at Newhall Prison. The stability of short- and long-term placements are good with short-term placements better than the national average. The number of looked after children placed for adoption is very good including those adopted within 12 months. The council has effective processes in place to deal with racist incidents.

The council acknowledges the need to strengthen its processes for regulation visits to children's homes and an appropriate action plan is in place.

Initial assessments are completed on time and there is increased capacity and training to support the completion of assessments. The council states that there are different ways of reporting on this throughout the country but are confident that the reporting of initial assessments is of a high standard.

All primary schools are committed to promoting the care and welfare of pupils; inspection information shows that a high proportion of schools provide good or very good support in these aspects with none being unsatisfactory.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are good. The provision of good quality childcare is increasing. The majority of full daycare and sessional daycare settings inspected in 2003 to 2004 were good or very good. No unacceptable standards were identified during the inspections although the council has created new teams, with appropriate expertise, to address areas of identified weaknesses. New providers are supported in their applications for registration and, once their provision is established, a combination of short courses and peer mentoring is offered to further promote good practice.

A high proportion of school admissions meet first preferences. No secondary schools have over 25% surplus places and those in primary schools are managed effectively, if necessary through closure and merger. Where reorganisation is not feasible, it has frequently been possible to take out surplus space by expansion of foundation/childcare provision or enhancing parent/community rooms. Wakefield is one of seven local authorities to have all secondary schools granted specialist school status.

Recent school inspections show that pupils' attitudes to school and their willingness to take full advantage of opportunities for learning are good in the majority of cases.

Opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities and the provision of lunchtime and after-school clubs are at least satisfactory in most schools. No schools in Wakefield are currently judged as requiring special measures. Five schools have serious weaknesses, but following substantial support from the authority, standards have improved in all five schools.

The proportion of pupils gaining the expected level 2 at the end of Key Stage 1 improved significantly in the 2004 test results in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of the end of the Key Stages 2 and 3 national tests have remained broadly in line with national figures though mathematics at Key Stage 2 has declined recently. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and those achieving one or more A* to G is in line with national figures and those of Wakefield's statistical neighbours.

The end of Key Stage 2 test results for looked after children significantly improved in 2004. A good proportion of looked after young people gained one or more GCSE or equivalent at A* to G grades but too few gained five or more A* to C grades. Three quarters of looked after children have up-to-date personal educational plans to promote educational achievement.

Exclusions in both primary and secondary schools are below the national average. The majority of permanently excluded pupils receive full-time education and the proportion of permanently excluded pupils reintegrated into school is above national figures. Furthermore, fewer pupils required alternative tuition for over a year following permanent exclusion. A wide range of alternative academic and vocational opportunities is made available for Key Stage 4 pupils, mostly within the public sector. The proportion of pupils who received alternative education because of illness was well above the national average.

The support for children and young people with challenging behaviours is well coordinated through family centres for the 0 to 10 age range and an intensive support team.

The council has developed a wide range of initiatives to tackle underachievement among vulnerable groups. Following consultation with young people, an education welfare officer has been appointed to provide additional support for looked after children; all residential units have computers with internet access; young offenders are supported by a full-time teacher; the youth offending team (YOT), has developed links with local colleges to help young people identify further learning opportunities post-16; and play scheme activities meet a broad range of activities including those with complex health needs.

Consultation and strategies have engaged agencies from the private sector and helped to serve the needs of a diverse community through creative arts, sports and leisure.

The council acknowledge that attendance of looked after children at school is too low. An education welfare officer is now a core member of the multi-disciplinary team (jointly funded and managed by Social Services and Education) to address the problems of school attendance.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. Of those schools recently inspected, pupils were free from bullying and racial harassment.

A range of services works collaboratively to reduce and prevent offending. As a consequence there has been a significant reduction in the number of first time offenders and a substantial reduction of re-offending. However, the rate of offending among looked after children has increased. Over two thirds of young offenders are involved in making amends to their victim or community and have access to education, training or employment opportunities. Nearly all of the youth offending team's performance targets were met or were at least satisfactory.

The council has implemented a wide range of processes to seek and act on the views of children and young people. The Young Peoples' Service has successfully developed a range of activities for involving and engaging young people including peer inspections of youth services; school councils, involving virtual learning environments and peer mentoring; and engaging young people from the South Asian communities. Methods such as personal participation, written or electronic communication or independent representation have been successfully adopted to enable looked after children and young people to communicate their views in their most recent statutory reviews. Young people have directly influenced services through the Health Service Options Clinic, connexions access points and peer inspections. Children with special education needs, including disabilities, have contributed to improved provision in services such as Leisure Link which is for children and young people over the age of eight years who have disabilities. It provides them with the support they need to take part in leisure activities in the community.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are good. Recent inspections focussing on the 14 to 19 age group found provision to be satisfactory in meeting the needs of learners, employers and the community. Partnership work was praised, as was the quality of teaching and learning. During 2003 to 2004 Ofsted inspected two schools with sixth forms. While one school was satisfactory overall, the other school's provision was judged very good with some excellent features.

Attainment in general advanced level qualifications is in line with the national average and statistical neighbours. Students make good progress and the value added indicators of three schools placed them among the top 25% of schools nationally. While provision is generally good, take up is still low in comparison with national averages. However, the number of young people not in education, employment or

training has reduced to below the set target. Some 75% of young offenders known to the youth offending team have access to education, training and employment and this figure demonstrates a steady improvement over the last three years.

A range of good strategies, supported by pathway plans, encourage looked after young people to participate in post-16 education and training. Those due to leave care are able to continue their foster placement beyond their 18th birthday thereby providing them with valuable continuity and opportunities for sustained further education and training. Wakefield's performance for care leavers aged 19 in education, training or employment between 2004 and 2005 is in the highest national banding at 65%. Care leavers are made aware of local employment opportunities by a well coordinated multi-agency approach.

Children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities receive careers education from Year 9 and their transitional needs are considered in annual reviews. All children with disabilities have a transition plan involving social services, health partners, education and connexions partners. Pupils in Year 11 have access to a good range of transitional support including: a period of work experience, which can be within a supported environment; link courses at a local further education college; access to independent travel training; and individual connexions interviews involving pupils and their parents. There are plans for a further college site in the North East of the district to secure a wider range of vocational and occupational learning.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting healthy lifestyles, especially through the healthy schools initiative • increase in looked after children's health assessments • evidence of strong and effective partnership between the council, health and education in delivering health issues. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited access for young offenders to non-acute CAMHS • impact of recruitment and retention difficulties in CAMHS.

<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • robust processes for dealing with racist incidents • good child protection processes • stability of short- and long-term placements • high numbers of children placed for adoption or adopted • the promotion of the care and welfare of pupils in schools. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • above average child care/early years inspections with “actions”, particularly the suitable person standard • recording of core assessments • high costs of residential/foster care linked to sickness levels and adequate pool of staff being maintained.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the increasing good quality provision for child care • pupils’ attitudes to learning • low exclusion figures. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attendance of looked after children • the proportion of looked after young people gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE • continue to raise attainment at Key Stages 2.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative working to reduce first time offences and re-offending • seeking the views of children and young people. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the re-offending rate of looked after children and young people.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality of 14 to 19 provision. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take up of post-16 provision.

Service management

There is clear evidence of a strong and stable management team which has enabled substantial progress to be made in moving towards the production of a single children and young people’s plan from 2006. Its capacity to further improve services for children and young people is promising.

The current plans focus on processes rather than outcomes and this makes it difficult to assess impact and to establish the extent to which strategies and policies provide value for money. The education service has a clearer knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses than when it was last inspected and this is reflected in the quality of the self-assessment, which is generally accurate in identifying areas for improvement.

The council collaborates closely with relevant partners in analysing needs and setting appropriate, challenging targets for improvement. The Children’s Services Review consulted directly with parents and children and young people — this review has been the starting point for current priorities. This consultation has continued through the development of Preventative Strategy, Sure Start/ Children’s Centres Programme and is central to the consultation currently taking place on the Children and Young People’s Plan.

The council has developed strategies to increase collaborative work between agencies and there are sound examples of services beginning to work together, for example to improve provision for looked after children. However, integrated work is not yet routinely established.

In recent years, the council has experienced difficulties in recruitment and retention, which have detracted from the implementation of policies in some areas.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

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

- progress on the preventative strategy in outcomes for children, particularly around referral & assessment thresholds and processes.

Enjoying and achieving

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

- attainment and attendance of looked after children.

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- attainment at Key Stages 2 and 3.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:

- the impact of consultations with children and young people on service provision.

Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to make a positive contribution:

- the effectiveness of support for looked after children in reducing final warnings and convictions.

Achieving well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- the low level of participation in post-16 education.

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: Wakefield City 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	3
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 overall 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