

16 January 2009

Ms Julia Almond  
Corporate Director for Children and Young People  
Borough of Telford and Wrekin  
PO Box 440  
Civic Offices  
Telford  
TF3 4WF

Dear Ms Almond

## **Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Telford and Wrekin 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 overall 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	2
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	2
Enjoying and achieving	2
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
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 2**

Telford and Wrekin Council provides a service that consistently delivers minimum requirements for children and young people. It has some innovative practice and is increasingly cost-effective. Capacity to improve, including the management of services, is good.

Effective partnership work is resulting in good improvements to family support and preventive services. The level of teenage pregnancy has reduced, although it is still above statistical neighbours. There has been some progress in improving English and increasing attendance in secondary schools, but the council recognises that further improvement is needed. Results in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 and for five A\* to C GCSE grades at Key Stage 4 have declined and are now below the national average. Monitoring of special schools by the council was insufficient to identify concerns about a school which was recently placed in an Ofsted category of concern.

Joint working has resulted in good progress in increasing opportunities for young people with complex learning difficulties to access leisure facilities. The youth service has expanded in order to reach more young people. Although the numbers of young people who are not in employment, education and training have risen slightly, collaborative work has resulted in innovative improvement strategies.

Outcomes for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse have improved through better working arrangements between the council and police with a reduction of repeat referrals. However, the joint area review (JAR) which took place in spring 2008 found that the quality of practice in social care services was variable which means that not all children receive timely and purposeful support.

As a result, some children are not being safeguarded sufficiently well. Quality assurance and performance management are not strong in this area.

## 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 being healthy are consistent with the evidence.

### Major strengths

- A comprehensive range of services meet the health needs of looked after children.
- Good progress towards developing child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), with increased provision at tiers 1 and 2 and a significant reduction in waiting times for specialist services.
- Very good support to disabled children and their families enabling smooth transitions at the early stages of childhood.

### Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Teenage pregnancy rates remain higher than statistical neighbours.
- Provision for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder is inconsistent.

## Staying safe

### Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area omits a number of important weaknesses in relation to safeguarding the most vulnerable children.

### Major strengths

- Outstanding multi-agency preventive and family support services delivered through local clusters using team around the child and common assessment framework processes.
- Very good reduction in numbers of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents compared with national average.
- Good placement stability and good quality reviews for looked after children.
- Services to children experiencing domestic violence have improved with early indications of a reduction in repeat referrals.
- Good take up of services from young carers.

### Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The percentage of initial assessments completed on time has deteriorated and is now below statistical neighbours.
- Not all children with a child protection plan and looked after children are allocated to a qualified social worker.
- The quality assurance system is insufficiently robust to ensure consistency in quality and recording of practice.
- The Local Safeguarding Children Board does not focus sufficiently on performance management information.

## Enjoying and achieving

### Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area omits a number of important weaknesses in relation to educational achievement and provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

<b>Major strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is good provision for nursery children in childcare settings.</li> <li>▪ Standards at Key Stage 1 are in line with similar areas and the national average.</li> <li>▪ Standards at Key Stages 2 and 3 and achievement of five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, at Key Stage 4 are in line with similar areas.</li> <li>▪ No school is below Key Stage 4 floor targets.</li> <li>▪ Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and looked after children achieve well.</li> <li>▪ Good reduction in the number of permanent exclusions.</li> </ul>
<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performance in some aspects of Key Stages 3 and 4 has declined. Results for five GCSEs at grades A* to C, and in all Key Stage 3 core subjects (level 5+) are now below the national average.</li> <li>▪ Looked after children miss too many days from school.</li> <li>▪ Insufficient monitoring to ensure good quality provision in a special school and high levels of fixed term exclusions of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in primary schools.</li> </ul>

## 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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<b>Major strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are positive outcomes from the participation of children and young people in service planning and delivery, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are looked after.</li> <li>▪ Looked after children and young people have access to a wide range of sport, leisure and educational activities.</li> <li>▪ Anti-social behaviour has reduced as a result of a coordinated approach within local clusters</li> </ul>
<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is scope for further improvement in the access to mainstream leisure and recreation services for children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</li> </ul>

## Achieving economic well-being

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.

<b>Major strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attainment at Level 2 and 3 by age 19 is above statistical neighbours.</li> <li>▪ Partnership work has resulted in an improved range of provision.</li> <li>▪ High participation rates of young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are looked after in employment, education or training post-16.</li> </ul>
<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The increasing proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training.</li> </ul>

## 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, as is its management of these services.

The council's high ambitions for children and young people have been successfully communicated throughout the organisation and to key partners. This has facilitated inter-agency working that is effective in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children, including those who are looked after by the council. It has also resulted in a rapid rise in the participation of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in post-16 education. Recently produced plans indicate better prioritisation, and a stronger performance management framework. The council reports that they have responded to the staying safe issues raised by the recent JAR.

The Children and Young People's Plan is based on a sound self-evaluation. However, some areas of relatively lower performance, for instance the progress in reducing teenage pregnancy have not been subject to sufficient scrutiny and analysis. Some aspects of educational attainment have declined and are now below the national average. The council has not effectively monitored provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in special schools.

<b>Major strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clear commitment to ambitions for children and young people at the highest levels communicated to, and shared by, all staff.</li> <li>▪ Excellent partnership work enabling the council to maximise its resources in most areas and achieve good value for money.</li> </ul>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Improved prioritisation and planning to enhance performance management.</li><li>▪ Outstanding multi-agency preventive and family support services delivered in local clusters.</li></ul> |
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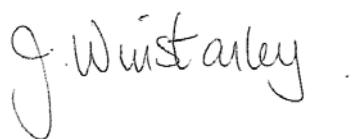
<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ In some key areas there is insufficient monitoring, management information and analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and provision.</li><li>▪ There are capacity pressures within children's social care teams.</li></ul> |
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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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager  
Local Services Inspection