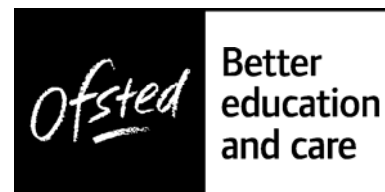


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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mrs Davies

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN TELFORD AND WREKIN BOROUGH 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

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded¹
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	4
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

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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

The Borough of Telford and Wrekin Council delivers good services for children and young people across all outcome areas, and shows improvement from the previous year, particularly in children's social care. The council provides strong leadership for agencies working with children, and has established an effective children and young person's partnership. Services are based on an effective assessment of need and are increasingly provided through a joint commissioning arrangement between the council and the Telford Primary Care Trust. The council has agreed with all partners that service delivery should be based on five clusters, and this is underpinned by detailed needs analysis at this level, and identifies those elements that are strong and those that need to improve. The council has been actively engaged in the Change for Children agenda, including becoming a pilot Children's Trust. Front line services are increasingly integrated and this has been recognised by the award of Beacon Status in two successive years. The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people is outstanding.

Being healthy

The authority makes a good contribution to improving the health of children and young people. Overall, outcomes are in line with similar authorities; however, there are areas where the authority is aware that health of children could improve. The authority has a comprehensive view of the health of the population based on five geographic clusters and is aligning services to meet priority needs. The authority continues to develop its understanding of needs, through joint work with the Public Health Director.

Multi-agency working is well embedded, and the authority has collaborated with partners to ensure that there is effective delivery of health services through children's centres. There are very high contact rates with new mothers in some of the most deprived areas of the authority, and this support has resulted in reduced attendance at hospital for young babies suffering from gastro-enteritis and respiratory infections. Teenage pregnancy is reducing at a good rate but remains higher than similar authorities, and additional support is being targeted towards ensuring the 2010 target is met. The authority is aware of rising rates of sexually transmitted disease among young people and again is focusing resources to reduce this risk. Almost all looked after children have annual checks on their health and the proportion is similar to the England average.

The authority shows commitment to the national Healthy Schools Standard, and is increasing children's awareness of the need to be fit and healthy. The authority has an effective programme (help2quit) to reduce smoking among young people, and is improving its success rate in reducing the number of those giving up the programme within four weeks. Drug screening is comprehensive in the youth offending service, and all children who become looked after are screened. Foster parents have been trained to identify when screening is required. Rates of young people in treatment are lower than expected, but when young people do receive treatment for substance misuse it is usually from a child centred service.

Access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is better than the England average. There are positive signs of raised awareness of mental health issues and improved access to support resulting from the co-location of mental health workers in multi-agency support teams. Assessment of young people needing help is prompt, but there have been some delays in providing therapeutic services to young people referred by the youth offending team.

Staying safe

The authority makes a good contribution to ensuring that children stay safe. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is undertaking work to reduce the number of accidents to children. The authority is responding appropriately to the findings of a survey of young people that identified bullying among their top ten priorities for things they would want to change.

The authority has been involved in a number of pilot programmes aimed at ensuring that there is effective early intervention in families and that the need for specialist services is reduced. The common assessment framework has been introduced and the authority is piloting information sharing arrangements using computer software to support both developments. There are multi-agency teams in all five clusters within the council area. There is evidence that these changes are making a difference, in that, for example, numbers on the Child Protection Register (CPR) are falling and referrals for social work assessment are more appropriate because low levels of need have been met effectively by other agencies.

The authority has improved performance on carrying out both initial and more detailed core assessments in a timely manner. All children on the Child Protection Register were reviewed within time scales, and all were allocated a suitably qualified social worker. The authority has commissioned an external review of its safeguarding procedures, which found arrangements were good. The authority has implemented most recommendations from that review, and intends to repeat the exercise in future. There are effective procedures to ensure that staff are checked before they work with children.

Looked after children are increasingly placed close to their homes, and the proportion in residential care has reduced. The pool of foster carers has increased in the year, and the authority has agreements with two independent fostering providers to supplement their own resources. Last published reports on the authority's own children's homes showed some signs of improvement though national minimum standards were not consistently met. An external consultant has been engaged to support improvements in these homes. The circumstances of all looked after children were reviewed within timescales, and the proportion who had a qualified social worker increased. The authority continues to use an agreed flexibility for some unqualified staff to monitor children looked after in some cases. There has been some deterioration in long-term stability of children's placements in foster care, but fewer children have been moved three or more times in the year and performance here is good.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the authority makes to ensuring children and young people achieve at schools and enjoy their education and leisure activities is good. Effectively targeted work has improved the quality of childcare and nursery education which is now of generally good quality. School inspection reports identify that the quality of provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and that the children make good progress. Parents are becoming more involved in their children's education through the authority's consultative procedures and through the development of children's centres. The authority is aware that standards reached in 2005 at the end of the Foundation Stage by children in the Borough were below the national average in each of the early learning goals. They have introduced suitable programmes to track achievement through the Foundation Stage and put into place targeted support for key aspects, such as early literacy.

For pupils of statutory school age standards are broadly in line with national averages and show year on year improvement. The pupils in Key Stage 1 get off to a good start, particularly in writing. However, progress is not always good enough in Key Stage 2 and results in English in 2005 were below the national average. The performance of boys has been an issue. Some effective work is helping to improve boys' progress, but is still as an area in need of further development. At Key Stages 3 and 4, although attainment overall is in line with the national average, there are some significant differences in standards between schools. The authority has been successful in introducing a range of innovative measures to drive up achievement in the lower performing schools; this action needs to be sustained to ensure further improvements in performance. Provision for post-16 education has some strong features, particularly the percentage of students achieving vocational qualifications and students achievement at advanced level or equivalent examinations.

Most of the schools inspected in the current academic year provide a good quality of education, which helps the pupils to achieve well. Pupils' personal development is good in most schools. Pupils enjoy school and appreciate the range of clubs and other recreational activities on offer. Attendance at primary schools is good. The authorised absence rate is above average in the secondary phase, but the rate of unauthorised absence is lower. There was a rise in permanent exclusions in secondary schools last year and the current figures show that this is still a problem in some schools. A good feature is that the attendance of looked after children is good and none of these young people has been permanently excluded from school.

The authority has an agreed protocol with schools to identify strengths and areas of concern, which is used intelligently to provide support proportionate to need. The authority has some outstanding provision in its schools and makes very effective use of this to share good practice, challenge underperformance and provide targeted support. This is having an impact in the way standards have continued to rise year on year, but there is still evidence of more pedestrian progress in a few schools and two where overall effectiveness is inadequate. The authority is providing these schools with good support and has set ambitious targets for when they will be removed from categories

of concern. The authority makes very effective use of national guidance, such as the Primary Leadership Programme, to help schools to become more self-sustaining and improve their results.

Making a positive contribution

The contribution the authority makes to this outcome is good. There is a wealth of opportunity for children and young people to participate in decision-making and understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the future. Almost all schools have school councils and this is helpful in engaging pupils from an early age in decision making and improving their awareness of democracy. The authority also has a well thought out strategy to engage young people at a more strategic level and uses this information well in its consultative procedures. There are many examples of children's involvement in shaping services, for instance children with disabilities being involved in planning the Access 2 Activities programme and in the review of Sensory Impairment Services. Young carers were involved in commissioning a new support provider. A particularly good feature is the way that the authority identifies tight timescales within its consultative framework to respond to individuals and groups so that their interest and enthusiasm is maintained. However, fewer looked after children have contributed to their own reviews than in other councils.

The last year has seen a significant improvement in the youth offending team performance, which has been brought about through effective partnership working and creative practice. There has been a reduction in the number of young people re-offending and some effective work to tackle the risk factors underpinning youth crime. However, the rate of reprimands, final warnings and convictions of looked after children has worsened.

Achieving economic well-being

The authority makes a good contribution to children and young people's economic well-being and most outcomes show improvements from last year. School inspection reports show that most schools are successful in providing a range of useful and accessible opportunities to prepare their pupils for the world of work, including innovative strategies in the primary phase. The colleges provide well for vocational education with some particularly effective opportunities for young people to link with employers. The authority consults children and young people very effectively and takes their views appropriately into account. A good feature of the authority's work is that information is readily available and set out well for its intended audience. The authority is using a diverse array of strategies, such as web-based information and text messaging, to prompt young people into taking suitable actions to guide their future.

The unemployment rate is low, but there are higher levels of low skilled and manual work than the national average. The proportion of all young people continuing in education post-16 is increasing and is now just behind the national average, with a significantly high proportion of young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds doing so. Of these young people, not all complete their courses, but the

drop out rate is falling. The authority has analysed the growing proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and acknowledges that this is an area of weakness. This analysis identifies the location of these young people and some of the contributory factors for them being in the NEET category.

The authority's support for looked after children is effective and helps them to secure a job, training placement or continue their education. Progression post-16 for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is less positive, particularly for young people with autistic spectrum disorders. The authority has identified this issue and has begun to tackle it through a range of potentially useful strategies. Young people who study for GCSE/VCE/A/AS level examinations do very well and results for the borough are well above the national average and those of statistical neighbours. However, a slightly lower percentage of 18 to 30 year olds go on to study in higher education.

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

The council provides strong leadership, and has developed effective relationships with partners, which have improved services to children and families in the area. It was one of the councils to pilot Children's Trust arrangements, and has been involved in development work to support the roll-out of information sharing arrangements, all designed to provide more effective safeguarding of children. The council's commitment and achievement have been recognised through the award of Beacon Status for children's services in two successive years. The council is one of the first authorities to enter into a local area agreement and is the only one to have been given additional single-pot budget flexibility.

The extent of joint working is reflected in the comprehensive needs analysis undertaken by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, and published in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), and a more detailed supplement. This was originally published a year ahead of the due date, and has been extensively reviewed in April 2006. The plan provides a clear analysis of strengths and weaknesses of services in the area, sets priorities for all partners and outlines the direction of future development.

Implementation of the plan is supported by the joint commissioning unit with the Primary Care Trust, through pooled budgets. This unit has undertaken work to improve services, for instance, by securing active involvement of service users in specifying and tendering the contracts for support of young carers.

Overall, the council has increased the budget for children's services year on year, though social care expenditure per child remains below the national average. Budget planning is strong and there is evidence of improvement in value for money through joint commissioning in the reduction in weekly costs for looked after children.

The council has responded positively to the areas for improvement that were raised in the APA letter last year. It has sustained its strengths and there are a number of improvements, particularly in children's social care. The council has used external consultancy appropriately to support this improvement.

Human resources performance has improved in social care and the authority's use of agency staff has reduced. More residential care workers are appropriately qualified and the authority has plans to work with its partners, including the private sector, to build its capabilities.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multi-agency working • CAMHS • actions to reduce hospital admissions among very young children • action to reduce smoking among young people • child centred services for young people who misuse substances. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in sexually transmitted disease amongst young people • reduction in teenage pregnancy.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common assessment framework implemented across all agencies • multi-agency working in clusters is having a positive impact on outcomes • children on CPR reduced • more initial and core assessments done within time scales • commissioning of external review of safeguards and implementation of actions • recruitment of foster carers and commissioning of services from external providers • external consultancy to improve standards in children's homes and the fostering service. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national minimum standards in children's homes and the fostering service were not consistently met.

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of education and care for children under eight years of age • sustained improvement in standards in primary and secondary schools • quality of provision in schools inspected in the most recent academic year • support for lower performing schools • the quality of personal development • monitoring and challenge for schools • good use of national programmes to support schools. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of boys • English results at Key Stage 2 • permanent exclusions in the secondary phase • continue to reduce differences in schools' performance.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wide range of opportunities for children and young people to have a say in their future • innovative and creative approaches to engage young people in consultations • rapid response to issues identified by young people • improved performance of youth offending team • reduction in recidivism. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the crime rate of looked after children • engagement of looked after children in their own reviews.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality and range of advice available to children and young people • innovative and effective range of communication with parents and young people • post-16 education provision • links with employers • consultation with stakeholders • low unemployment rate • GCSE/VCE/A/AS level results. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment and training routes for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities • the proportion of young people in the NEET category.

<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comprehensive analysis of needs • CYPP produced early and reviewed in 2006 • strong leadership and positive engagement with all partner organisations • joint commissioning arrangements • budget planning • workforce development • engagement with Every Child Matters initiatives at a national level including pilot programmes. 	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p>
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Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA:

- Reduction in teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.
- The quality of services provided for looked after children.
- The impact of multi-agency teams on support for children in need.
- Improving achievement for boys.
- Value added Key Stage 1 to 2.
- Improvement to lower performing schools.
- Offending rates of children looked after.
- The proportion of young people in the NEET category.
- Transition for young people with a learning disability.

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 information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection