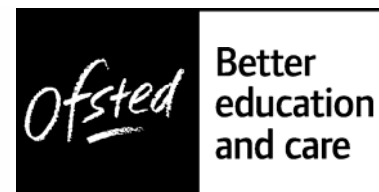


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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Ms Ann Baxter  
Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services  
Stockton on Tees Borough Council  
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**1 December 2005**

Dear Ms Baxter

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 21 June 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your 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.

**Being healthy**

Outcomes in this area are good.

Relevant health priorities have been identified through widespread consultation with young people and have informed strategic planning. There are strong partnerships with the Primary Care Trust.

The key priorities are being effectively addressed through a clear focus on the healthy schools award and collaborative work with other partners including pilot initiatives in the extended school. Children receiving social care services benefit from a range of initiatives and activities aimed at achieving healthier lifestyles for all children in the area, particularly in relation to healthy eating, obesity, smoking, and substance abuse. Although performance in monitoring the health of looked after children is good, it is below the level achieved in the past two years.

There have been improvements in the community and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), notably at neighbourhood level. CAMHS support for looked after children is clearly targeted and is developing effectively, although the number of dedicated CAMHS social workers is well below that found in comparable authorities.

The council has correctly identified areas for further development. It is working to address acknowledged difficulties to the establishment of shared priorities with its health partners, to develop statistical indicators of impact and to reverse a 6.2% increase in the rate of under 18 pregnancies since 1998.

## **Staying safe**

Outcomes in this area are good.

There has been a significant fall in the number of referrals of children in need. Geographic re-structuring of social services teams and the increased effectiveness of preventative services has enabled a change in the eligibility criteria for referrals and allowed a greater focus on the most vulnerable children and families. There has been a decrease in the number of children on the child protection register together with a large increase in the number of de-registrations. The council carefully monitors such indicators and overall activity. It is confident that child protection activity continues to be appropriate and well managed. Closer integration of services as the council moves towards the establishment of a children's trust is expected to ensure increasingly effective coordination of child protection activity. The council is working to an appropriate time scale, together with partners, to establish a local safeguarding board. There is effective collaboration between agencies and health, police, Sure Start, social care and education services work well together.

Support for the safety of looked after children is monitored effectively through placement visits by the children's rights officer. The council recognises the continuing need to address the balance of services for looked after children and is adapting its strategies to achieve this. There is a clear need to improve the stability of placements of looked after children and this can in part be addressed through evolving strategies to place more children for fostering and adoption.

Schools have effective systems for child protection and ensuring health and safety with all schools reported to have designated teachers and a governor with oversight of child protection. Schools have taken advantage of anti-bullying training to develop whole school policies and procedures supported by a council appointed anti-bullying officer. There is satisfactory support for ensuring the health, welfare and personal development of pupils in schools.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory.

The overall quality of early years provision is good and supports children well to meet early learning goals. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 are in line with national averages for reading and mathematics and above for writing. Rates of improvement

are above those found nationally. At Key Stage 2 results are in line with national averages for English but are above the national averages in mathematics and science. The rate of improvement is greater in mathematics and science than in English where performance matches the national rate of improvement. Value added from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is average. The authority has identified concerns about the underachievement of black and minority ethnic pupils in writing and the achievement of boys as particular areas for further improvement and is implementing appropriate support strategies.

At Key Stage 3 performance is in line with the national average in mathematics and science but in English dipped below the national average in 2004. Although this matched the performance of statistical neighbours it is a concern and the authority is targeting support through the Key Stage 3 strategy. Value added from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is below average, linked in part to the decline in attainment in English. At Key Stage 4 performance has been in line with statistical neighbours and national averages but the proportion attaining five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at A\* to C grades fell by 1.3% in 2004 and is now below the national average. Value added from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 is below average. The authority has recognised this and has put in place appropriate strategies to improve the position.

The support for pupils with special educational needs and for looked after children is effective. An internal review of the performance of pupils with statements of special educational need in mainstream schools shows that they are making good progress. However, the proportion of pupils with statements in special schools is higher than found nationally. The authority has a clear strategy for encouraging the transfer of pupils with statements to mainstream schools by developing strong support networks between specialist and mainstream provision.

The proportion of looked after children achieving one A\* to G grade at GCSE has been above the national average in 2002 and 2003 and, although it declined in 2004, is good. The proportion gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades has been in line with national averages but a small cohort with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs saw this fall to zero in the 2004 outturn figure. There are educational facilitators in all residential children's homes who link directly with schools to ensure that all looked after children have appropriate support.

The provision of support for attendance and behaviour is good. Attendance has improved and is in line with the national averages in primary and secondary schools. The attendance of looked after children is also good. The rates of permanent exclusions are below national rates for secondary schools and well below the national rate for primary schools. The reintegration of excluded pupils into school is particularly effective.

Support for schools placed in an Ofsted formal category of concern is effective. There is currently only one school with serious weaknesses. Increasingly effective monitoring, challenge and intervention have reduced the number of schools causing concern to the authority.

## **Making a positive contribution**

The council's commitment to supporting involvement, participation, and enabling children and young people to make a positive contribution is good overall. There is a good range of initiatives to support their involvement in decision making.

There are effective strategies for supporting young people in meeting changes in their lives at times of transition and support for involving vulnerable groups in reviewing their futures is well developed. Looked after children are actively involved in the community and in decision-making. Efforts are now being focused on children with special educational needs or disabilities with some success.

The council is investing in providing enhanced support for the placement of, and guidance for, looked after children. There is a real commitment to encouraging the participation of looked after children at school through a proactive admissions policy, educational support, behaviour support, support to prevent exclusion, and provision of enhanced recreational opportunities. This is not always reflecting a positive picture: an above average proportion of looked after children received a conviction or final warning in 2004 and the level of involvement in reviews is below that of comparable authorities.

All schools have school councils and involve pupils in the running of the school. Ofsted school inspection reports confirm that protection from bullying, racism and harassment is satisfactory in all but one primary school. The majority of schools provide good support for personal development.

The Youth Service is active in promoting the involvement of young people in decision-making and participation in democratic processes at school, community and authority level. The Youth Offending Service is providing good support for vulnerable groups and this is reducing reoffending levels.

The impact of consultation with children and young people has been considerable at service delivery level but is still developing at a strategic level. The council is however committed to recognising the importance of the views of young people in developing services for the future.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

Outcomes in this area are good overall.

Standards of attainment in schools with sixth forms are in line with national averages and above those of statistical neighbours. No sixth forms are judged to be inadequate.

Overall the quality of education provided for 14 to 19 year olds is good. The proportion of young people continuing with full-time education at 16 is improving and is above the national average at 86%. The authority is a pathfinder for 14 to 19 developments and has put in place a coordinated strategy to develop a more flexible curriculum with enhanced vocational provision through common timetabling in schools. This has been enabled by an active partnership between schools, further education, the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the authority. This partnership is delivering coordinated staff development and facilitating exchange of pupils between schools through centralised transport arrangements. This and the effective delivery of the aim higher strategy is encouraging continuation into education and training.

Working in partnership with Connexions and the local LSC the young people and looked after children team is providing effective support to looked after young people on transition. The retention rate of care leavers into education, training and employment has improved and is now 90%. In addition 89% of pupils with statements of special educational need continue into education training or employment at age 16 with effective support for transition. In order to improve further the opportunities for young people with disabilities the council should continue to extend direct payments to carers or young people.

In addition there has been a focus on increasing the range of good quality child care across the borough to support young parents in accessing further education or training.

## SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pilot programme of health support services at extended school</li> <li>• obesity action plan linked to provision of physical activity programme and healthy eating programmes</li> <li>• drugs education programmes</li> <li>• quality of sport and PE provision in schools</li> <li>• improved CAMHS service</li> <li>• targeted CAMHS support to looked after children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduced teenage pregnancy levels</li> <li>• barriers to establishing shared priorities with NHS are reduced</li> <li>• monitoring and evaluating the impact and outcomes of initiatives</li> <li>• further improvement to monitoring the health of looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• robust procedures in place to address child abuse within the council, including within individual schools; children on the child protection register are supported well</li> <li>• effective collaboration between agencies with Health, police, Sure Start, social care and education services working well together</li> <li>• support for the safety of looked after children monitored effectively through visits by the children's rights officer</li> <li>• the council is working to an appropriate timescale for the local safeguarding board.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• long term stability and appropriateness of placements for looked after children</li> <li>• balance of service provision for looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality of early years provision</li> <li>• attainment at Key Stage 1 and 2</li> <li>• support for attendance and behaviour</li> <li>• effective support for schools in Ofsted categories of concern.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• underachievement of minority ethnic pupils in writing</li> <li>• attainment of boys</li> <li>• recent inconsistency in attainment trends in secondary schools.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the council's commitment to the involvement and participation of children and young people</li> <li>• the majority of schools provide good support for personal development</li> <li>• agencies, including Youth Service and Youth Offending Service, provide good support for vulnerable groups</li> <li>• clear policies and procedures for supporting the involvement and achievement of looked after children</li> <li>• good range of initiatives to support involvement in decision making</li> <li>• Youth Offending Service is impacting on reoffending levels.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitoring and evaluating the impact and outcomes of consultation.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an effective co-ordinated 14 to 19 strategy leading to an above average rate of young people, including care leavers, in education, training and employment</li> <li>• high levels of young people in full time education.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing the provision of direct payments to carers and young people.</li> </ul>

## Service management

The authority has clearly established systems for the analysis of local needs which have identified appropriate priorities for each of the five outcomes. This process has been completed through a strong partnership with the Primary Care Trust, the police, headteachers and the voluntary sector and other partners. The views of local consultative panels of the population have been included and this has involved over 800 children and young people.

A well coordinated planning system across the council is supported by clear procedures for performance management. Current plans for each service reflect the priorities of the corporate plan and the community strategy. These plans are well structured have clear timescales, responsibilities, costings and a range of measurable success criteria. This provides a sound foundation for the development of the children and young people plan over the coming months.

The self evaluation included appropriate references to a range of national performance data and indicators. There was clear evidence provided of the commitment to consultation and particularly to the involvement of young people in decision-making.

The review of the analysis of needs, service management and targeting of resources was particularly clear. The council showed effective knowledge of many of its strengths and areas for development. This was particularly evident in relation to supporting the achievement of young people and their participation in decision-making and the community. The authority recognises that in some areas such as promoting healthy living it is not yet making explicit the impact of its initiatives.

There is a well developed management programme in place to support officers during the transition to an integrated service. Schools are being actively supported in delivering the work force reform agenda and there are few teacher vacancies.

## **Areas for exploration in the joint area review**

### **Being healthy**

*Healthy life-styles are promoted for children and young people:*

- action to evaluate the impact of the range of initiatives to promote healthy living.

### **Staying safe**

*Looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:*

- actions to ensure an effective commissioning strategy for care places.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

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

- action to ensure that attainment in secondary schools continues to improve.

### **Making a positive contribution**

*Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make a positive contribution:*

- the effectiveness of the strategy for increasing the involvement of pupils and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.



## **Achieving economic 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 development of the 14 to 19 strategy post 'pathfinder' status.

## **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: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements <sup>1</sup>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	<b>2</b>
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	<b>3</b>

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### 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