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26 November 2007

Ms Romi Bowen  
Director of Children's Services  
London Borough of Southwark  
Mabel Goldwin House  
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London  
SE1 3DY

Dear Ms Bowen

## **2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. 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.

### **Overall effectiveness of children's services**

**Grade 3**

The council continues to deliver good services for children and young people, as at the time of the 2006 APA. There have been several further improvements in outcomes since then, with council services making a positive difference to the children and young people of Southwark. In many areas, outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people are rising in a generally improving overall picture, with the gap narrowing. Performance indicators in staying safe and being healthy are generally better than those in similar councils and often better than national averages. Many indicators in achieving economic well-being show significant improvement as a result of council work. Children and young people are involved well in service planning, design and evaluation and they generally appreciate what is on offer. In education, outcomes are broadly in line with those of similar councils and improving at a similar rate overall. The education service is changing and is well positioned to improve further. The children's services department became fully incorporated from January, though there is long standing and successful joint provision with the Primary Care Trust. Children's services are very well integrated. However, an area of some weakness is the quality of provision across the early years Foundation Stage, though there are signs of improvement.

Overall, the contribution the council makes to children and young people being healthy, staying safe, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being is good. Its contribution to enjoying and achieving is adequate but with good and improving features.

## **Being healthy**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

Health services and council staff work well together to identify need, and achieve effectively integrated universal and targeted services to promote the health of children and young people. Strong core health services are delivered through a good range of age-related services for children and young people. Health and social care practitioners are increasingly engaged in joint assessment and service delivery in children's centres.

Health promotion activity is effectively targeted at the most vulnerable groups and outcomes are generally better than similar councils and national averages, with particularly good performance in non-smoking and rates of breast-feeding. Well targeted actions are achieving better outcomes in respect of the incidence of low birth weights. Thorough data and needs analyses underpin effective recent actions to improve infant mortality and immunisation rates, though these require further improvement. A range of actions achieved a considerable reduction in the number of teenage conceptions last year, though the rate of these remains above those of similar councils and the national average and will need to reduce considerably to meet the 2010 national target. Children and young people were well engaged in shaping these actions which are supported by a strong and wide ranging social and relationship education programme.

The council is exceeding national targets in the Healthy Schools programme both in terms of the proportion of schools involved and those that achieve Healthy School status. The programme is well linked to other safety and health promotion strategies. However, health actions imposed on new and active providers in Ofsted childcare inspections were above those in similar councils and nationally. Good coverage of schools was achieved in obesity surveys. The targeted group of children showed no increase in obesity rates this year, in contrast to other groups.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is good. All service extension targets have been met. Services are multi-agency, and effective steps have been taken to improve access to services by specific groups including Black and minority ethnic children and young people. Good support and training is offered to partner agencies. Targeted services for vulnerable groups are well provided through integrated teams. The service meets the national average for progress towards a comprehensive service. The proportion of children and young people having to wait more than 26 weeks for a service is better than national average.

The physical and mental health needs of looked after children and young people are well met through a multi-disciplinary specialist health team that works effectively with all children and young people and their carers whether their placement is within or outside the borough. Health outcomes for these children and young people continue to be better than the national average and continue to improve toward performance of statistical neighbours. The new virtual young people's substance misuse team provides effectively for dedicated children's referral pathways, enhanced links with CAMHS and voluntary organisations and supports a comprehensive drugs education programme in schools. The number of young people in treatment has increased and is above the London average.

Good progress has been made in improving co-ordination and collaboration between staff of different disciplines in assessment and care planning for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children and young people and their families have played a significant part in the design of a new 'one stop' child development centre providing co-ordinated health and social care services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### **Areas for development**

- Continue to reduce the number of teenage conceptions.
- Continue to improve rates of immunisation and infant mortality.

## **Staying safe**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

The council has a good strategy for providing a safe environment and safeguarding children, encompassing health and safety in the home, community safety and child protection. Agencies across the borough contribute strongly. All schools inspected by Ofsted met government requirements for safeguarding children and were judged satisfactory or better in the extent to which pupils adopted safe practices. A majority of children report feeling safe in the borough and effective action has been taken by the council to increase safety in the community and on school routes where responses indicated this was a concern. The number of road traffic incidents has reduced in excess of the national target. However, in childcare inspections a higher proportion of actions were imposed on new and active providers than in similar councils and the national average in a number of areas, including safety and child protection.

Further implementation of the anti-bullying and anti-violence strategies includes a recent pilot extension of incident reporting by schools beyond that of racial bullying, the outcome of which will be reported to the Local Children Safeguarding Board (LSCB). The LSCB addresses its wide brief well, providing strong leadership in practice in safeguarding and has working links with neighbouring boards. The board

has established effective procedures for conduct of and implementation of learning from serious case reviews. Agencies operate within a clear policy and procedural framework and annual audits are completed. There is a well-established programme of multi-agency training commissioned by the board with effective outreach to minority community groups. Partner agencies routinely monitor and review the application of thresholds for safeguarding intervention.

The length of time children remain on the child protection register has been successfully reduced in response to the previous APA recommendation and compares well with the national average. Targeted performance oversight and further embedding of good practice will continue to achieve further improvement. All registered children are allocated social workers and reviews are held in a timely fashion. The systematic review of repeat referrals recommended in the 2006 APA has also resulted in performance that is better than average for both child-in-need referrals and child protection re-registrations. The timeliness of initial and core assessments is good and better than that of similar councils. Evidence of increasingly effective preventive and support services and shared understanding of thresholds is found in the increasing percentage of initial assessments that arise from a declining number of referrals.

Action in response to the 2006 APA recommendation to increase the adoption rate has achieved positive results but the proportion of children looked after who are adopted remains below that of similar councils and the national average. Improved measures are in place to help identify children who would benefit from being adopted and ensure that processes are completed in required timescales. These measures include tracking of all looked after children, early stage involvement in planning meetings by adoption specialists and systematic checks throughout review processes to explain, where needed, why adoption is not an option for individual children. All looked after children have allocated social workers. Placement stability and timeliness of reviews have improved and are better.

### **Areas for development**

- Reduce the number of actions imposed under staying safe in childcare inspections.
- Improve further the rate of adoptions.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

**Grade 2**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate, with good and improving aspects.

The new, restructured leadership in the education service is strong and broadly welcomed by schools. The 2006 APA noted the wide variation in the performance of primary schools as a significant issue. The council is addressing this by developing sensitively its relationship with all schools, including those which have been harder to

engage. There is evidence that this is leading to most primary schools becoming increasingly willing to share the leadership responsibility with the council for raising standards, in a spirit of greater trust. Collaborative work between schools, including federations, is having a positive impact. The council's engagement with its secondary schools, including the many academies, is partnership-based and robust and in some ways a model from which primary schools have learned.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with low attainment. By age five, their attainment remains significantly below the national average. Outcomes against the Foundation Stage profile declined, and the gap between Southwark and the national average, widened in 2006. Communication, language and literacy is rightly an area of particular concern to the council as outcomes are low and because of its importance to future learning. Children for whom English is an additional language, and those of Bangladeshi origin, achieve less well than others. The availability of childcare places continues to be good and well matched to local needs. However, the number of actions imposed by Ofsted on active providers in enjoying and achieving are nearly twice those of similar councils and seven times higher than the national average. In one in every 10 private nursery inspections, teaching was graded inadequate, a much higher proportion than similar councils or nationally. The council has worked to reduce the incidence of inadequate provision and the number of actions imposed on new providers is below the national average.

From a historically low base, school standards are improving at most stages, with the best progress being made by older children. The rate of improvement is consistently broadly similar to the national average and that of similar councils. By the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, standards are broadly in line with those in similar councils but well below the national average. In Key Stage 1, standards fell in 2006 and unvalidated data from 2007 indicates a further small decline in some areas. Conversely, standards have risen consistently in Key Stage 2 with early indications that this has continued in 2007. Nevertheless, there remains considerable variation between standards in schools serving similar areas. At Key Stage 3 in 2006, standards in English rose broadly in line with similar councils; in mathematics and science standards also showed continued improvement but remain below those of similar councils. Progress from Key Stages 2 to 3 was slightly above the national average. At GCSE in 2006, the proportion of students attaining five or more A\*-C grades in any subjects, and when including English and mathematics, was below that of similar councils. The rate of improvement at five or more A\*-C was below that of similar councils but when English and mathematics are taken into account, the improvement was above that of similar councils and nationally. Early indications suggest a significant further improvement in the latter measure in 2007, building on existing success in Key Stage 4. No schools failed to meet Key Stage 4 floor targets in 2006 and, overall, students' progress from age 11 to age 16 is above average, indicating that students often make their best progress in Years 10 and 11.

The overall grades from school inspections broadly match the national picture. Recent primary inspections show that where schools leadership and management, including governance, are visionary and rigorous, standards rise because of good and improving teaching and assessment and exciting curricula. Where school leaders and

governors are not as closely focused on standards and teaching, pupils achievement is lower, although their personal development is generally good. The council believes that school leadership is improving and has targeted significant support towards many of its lower achieving primary schools, leading to some overall improvement.

Three schools require special measures. The council's support to schools in this category has improved and is now consistently good. Outstanding interim leadership was provided in a school that left special measures in May 2007 by the central Southwark School Leaders Team (SSLT), which makes a strong contribution across the borough.

Pupils generally enjoy school. Attendance and exclusion rates are broadly in line with those of similar councils. Considerable attention is paid to both areas and there are signs of recent improvement. Significant absenteeism by looked after children is lower than average and more such children aged 16 took at least one qualification in 2006 than nationally. However, the proportion of them gaining five or more higher grade GCSEs was below that in similar councils. The overall provision of school places is adequate and admission arrangements are appropriate with about half of parents receiving their first choice at secondary level.

Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provision is being strategically re-aligned. The needs of students in a PRU in special measures which closed were provided for suitably. The extended schools programme is growing and becoming well established with the council being confident it meets the needs of most young people. The net cost of the youth service remains high but, following the 2006 APA recommendation, the number of 13-19 year olds reached has increased.

Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. The proportion of them being excluded from mainstream school is lower than that of similar councils or nationally, though the opposite is true in special schools. Statements of special educational need, where necessary, are issued quickly by the council. As noted in the 2006 APA, further funding for learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been recently devolved to schools though is too early for the council to evaluate the effectiveness of this change.

### **Areas for development**

- Improve further the support and monitoring provided to, and where needed interventions in, all EYFS settings in order to improve young children's readiness for future learning.
- Improve the progress of pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and overall standards by age 16.
- Improve the leadership, governance and provision in lower achieving schools, by increasing the understanding of, and the priority given to, strategies for raising standards in those schools



## Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

Transition planning for young people with continuing care needs, including those with disabilities and looked after children, is good and improving. Effective protocols and partnerships exist between the council's adult services, the housing department, Connexions, and voluntary sector services for young people with continuing care needs. All young people with disabilities have transition plans.

There is a well established participation strategy for looked after children with the efficiency of reviews being better than the national average and that of similar councils. A variety of effective approaches enable young people both to express their views and directly influence the shaping of services and training of staff. Good processes are in place to identify and support young carers and the council has commissioned external research to help make plans to extend these popular services and ensure their sustainability.

Regular and sophisticated sharing and analysis of intelligence within the council and its partners about community safety issues supports effective inter-agency work to reduce anti-social behaviour. A good range of effective crime prevention strategies is in place. The number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system has reduced well, in line with the national average, but remains a little above that of similar councils. Levels of offending by young people identified and subject to integrated support plans are low. Final warnings and convictions of looked after young people are lower than the national average as is the re-offending rate for all young people. Local systems, such as the Youth Inclusion Support Panel, respond flexibly to changing needs. Support programmes for young people are wide ranging and required to demonstrate their effectiveness. These programmes are well linked into other strategies such as workforce reform and the parenting strategy.

In response to an 2006 APA area for improvement, access to substance misuse services has been increased through the Youth Offending Team (YOT). All young people in this service are now screened and the number in treatment is increasing but performance against the national assessment target remains below that of statistical neighbours.

A systematic approach is taken to the engagement of young people in service development, including vulnerable young people and those from minority groups. Young people's views are channelled into the local area management structures. The council sees the need to continue to develop this and is participating in a national project to develop a comprehensive and consistent approach to participation of young people to strategic planning, service design and decision-making. Young people are successfully enabled to achieve a range of external accreditation awards as a result of their involvement and achievements. There is a comprehensive range

of activities for all young people, information about which is advertised in media which they shape or produce.

### **Areas for development**

- Continue to develop a specific, comprehensive and consistent approach to participation of young people to strategic planning, service design and decision making.
- Increase the number of substance misuse assessments for those young people engaged with the (YOT).

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The improvements noted in the last two APA letters have been sustained.

The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has reduced very significantly from a high base in the past year as a result of a good range of strategies, clear commitment across the council and its partners and careful tracking of the young people. In spite of this, the NEET rates remain above those of similar councils, in all ethnic groups. A key reason for this above average figure is the low employment rate: the proportion of 16 year olds who continue in education or training is a little higher than the national average and that of similar councils. The NEET rate for teenage mothers is good compared with similar councils and national averages, and the proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are NEET is in line with averages. A lower than average proportion of 16 year olds looked after are NEET by age 19. A higher proportion of care leavers than similar councils or nationally live in suitable accommodation, as judged by the council.

The council carefully and effectively ensures it has sufficient childminders across the borough and provides good advice to families about this, and parenting. It has good evidence that this helps many young families improve their economic well-being and get into work. The improved extended schools provision also makes a positive impact on this. Current renewal programmes, for example at the Elephant and Castle, are designed to ensure that new jobs and suitable training are made available for local people. Overall, the proportion of children aged from 0 to 15 living in households where no-one is working is in line with similar councils.

The local 14-19 partnership continues to develop productively. The curriculum, including the e-curriculum, provided in the high-profile Southwark Guarantee, is good, relevant and improving well through the careful development and successful approval of diploma lines. Progression routes are clear. Strong partnerships continue to grow in the 14-19 forum, including the council, the LSC, Southwark College and all secondary schools and academies. As a result, the proportions of young people



gaining Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by age 19 are above those in similar councils and improving. Success, and achievement, rates are also improving though are generally below the national average. The council's Secondary Strategy Team provides well targeted support to schools, addressing some inconsistencies in provision in sixth forms. Suitable targets exist for further improvements in outcomes across Southwark although the profile of these in future planning, including the area-wide action plan, is low. Actions to be taken within the partnership are not always well enough linked to these targets. A new principal officer for 14-19 has been appointed with funding coming from across the partnership, including schools. The job description for this post indicates this point is understood and to be addressed.

### **Areas for development**

- Reduce the NEET rate further.
- In planning, ensure that targets for young people's attainment by age 19 are given greater priority and are linked clearly to intended actions.

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

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The council's capacity to improve its services for young people is good and its management of these services is good.

The new children's services department is being well managed during this time of planned change. Management systems are sophisticated, sustainable and effectively integrated. Self-evaluation processes are robust and clearly and honestly identify areas where improvement is needed. Priorities are clear with preventive services appropriately given precedence. These priorities are well followed through into corporate, multi-agency, partnership and departmental plans which are put into effect well, leading to a track record of improvement. There is more urgent work to be done in improving the education service than in most other areas but the direction being given in this by the responsible deputy director is clear. The council has restructured its management of the education service appropriately to suit current circumstances. This includes the recent appointment of an assistant director with specific responsibility for children aged 0 to 6, to co-ordinate and lead the needed improvements in EYFS.

The council's corporate plan significantly features children's services, showing a strong overall commitment, as well as the coherent approach taken across the council. One example is the clear link made between adult and youth unemployment. The lead member for children's services is well informed. Young people themselves, including those who may be vulnerable, contribute effectively to service planning and evaluation.

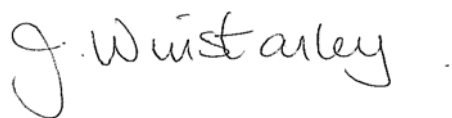
The council points to its strong culture of performance management, ensuring that people are clear about their roles, appropriately supported and accountable. Through its benchmarking, the department recognises that many of its services are provided at high cost in comparison with similar councils because of the high numbers of children looked after and the complexity and turbulence of the population. The provision supports generally good outcomes in challenging circumstances with the council meeting its Gershon efficiency targets for 2006/07. Some efficiency savings have been made in the recent departmental restructuring and, for example, in the recently negotiated cheaper home to school transport contract. There is a low turnover amongst children's social workers providing stability in the department. Social work teams are being gradually moved into children's centres. Within the next year another nine children's centres are planned to open, alongside the extension of the use of the Common Assessment Framework. The council's planning to achieve these significant changes, without reducing the current good efficiency in work processes, is at an early stage.

### **Areas for development**

- Ensure that the department's highest priority is given to improving educational outcomes at all levels.
- Improve the management, support and monitoring as appropriate for all EYFS settings, including schools and private providers.

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.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager  
Local Services Inspection