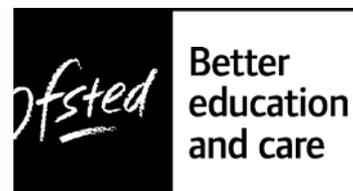


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Ms Romi Bowen
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1 December 2005

Dear Ms Bowen

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 4 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and children's social care services within your authority. We are grateful for the information that 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, particularly in the way that healthy lifestyles are promoted through partnership between key services. Priorities are well defined, supported by targeted surveys of users. In schools there is good participation in sport and an increasing number of schools are working to achieve 'Healthy School' status, from about 25% at present, but more could seek to achieve accreditation. Children and young people have better than average oral health.

The health needs of children looked after are met very effectively and indicators exceed national averages, the results of specific actions by staff dedicated to these outcomes. It is pleasing to note the further development of dental health services for those children looked after aged 16+, to encourage greater uptake.

The number of social workers who work as part of the multidisciplinary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team is high in comparison with comparator groups. The council is supporting a range of innovative strategies in schools to promote emotional well-being and recognises the need to further improve access to preventative services. There is timely referral of non-acute matters to CAMHS of young people known to the Youth Offending Team.

The incidence of teenage pregnancy is high, but stabilising. The 'Teenage Pregnancy Strategy' is seeking to reduce this high level, and has been risk assessed as a cause for concern with promising prospects for the future by the DfES.

The self-assessment helpfully addresses wider health issues including breastfeeding; infant mortality; immunisation; smoking; primary care and hospital waiting times, amongst others. Since Southwark is drug action high focus area, future self-assessments need to address the outcomes of current strategies more fully.

The council recognises the need to improve the delivery of health services and their coordination to children with disabilities. This is to be supported by a new Child Development Centre.

Staying safe

Within the wider 'staying safe' context, local consultation and a MORI poll identified that children feel less safe than average when walking on their own in the area. This and other key issues are subject to the scrutiny of the Safer Southwark partnership, with a prime focus on youth and gang crime.

Usefully the self-assessment addresses road casualties and reports a reduction in injuries to children between 2001 and 2003, with the council being on track to meet its local PSA target.

Focusing more specifically on children's social care, outcomes in this area are good overall, and performance improvements are built upon secure foundations. A Children's Services Inspection in 2004/05 identified the strategic strengths of the council, but highlighted areas for improvement at the service delivery level. These related fundamentally to improving practice consistency supported by more robust quality assurance mechanisms. These needs were echoed as part of the CSCI reviewing process into a serious care review, which highlighted performance weaknesses. A local improvement agenda has been drawn up and quality assurance systems are being more fully applied, with information going both to senior managers and to those with direct practice responsibilities.

Over the forthcoming year the council appropriately plans to improve further its level of assessments on children referred within seven days from 65%. Core assessments completed within 35 days have risen from 50% to 77%. These improvements need to be coupled with ensuring that the quality of assessments and reviews is included within the more active quality assurance framework and, that where required, remedial action is taken.

Performance indicators suggest that the child protection register is well and actively managed. All cases are reviewed as required. Work is in hand to ensure that issues of thresholds are understood across agencies (especially with schools) and that where there are referrals from outside agencies there is now good information exchange, to include feedback from the council in response to referrals. The developing interagency work to support the protection of vulnerable children, especially between schools and social care, is a positive and noteworthy strength.

The relatively high and above average numbers of children looked after will require ongoing attention. Placement stability indicators are generally good, supported further by a positive fostering inspection this year. Further attention needs to be paid to improving numbers adopted, but there was a very high level of adoptions within 12 months of the 'best interest' decision in 2004/05, at 97%. All children looked after have a named social worker. An average proportion (79%) of children looked after aged under 10 are in foster care, and more is being done to place them within the council area. There is lower than average use of residential provision.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are unsatisfactory, although there are some encouraging signs of improvement, particularly in results at Key Stage 3 and school attendance.

Access to childcare, and provision for three and four year olds, has expanded at a faster rate than the national average. The quality of early years provision, however, is variable while some settings support children well in enabling them to meet the early learning goals, 50% more day care settings compared to national average were deemed to have serious weaknesses and a third more were providing an unacceptable service. There are shortcomings in the quality of teaching in a significant proportion of children's centres. When inspected, proportionally, significantly higher number of day care settings and childminders was issued with action to improve. The council is reviewing its provision for early years and putting extensive measures in place to rectify these weaknesses and improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children.

Standards of attainment in Southwark schools consistently remain below the averages nationally and for comparator groups. Overall results at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have remained significantly below the national average over the last five years. Value added score at Key Stage 2 is in the bottom quartile and the LEA's national position in English and mathematics declined further in 2003. The number of schools below the 65% floor target has fallen, although it is still above national average. Overall attendance has improved and the schools are being supported to overcome the significant gender gap and the low attainment of Black Caribbean boys. The council is determined to tackle the deep seated and significant underachievement of primary aged children and has identified attainment at Key Stage 2 as a 'system-wide' priority.

Targeted intervention and support and effective implementation of Key Stage 3 strategy has produced pleasing results. The gap has narrowed significantly for the third consecutive year, although standards at Key Stage 3 remain well below those for all schools nationally. The majority of schools have improved in all subjects; the best progress being made by the most challenging schools. In 2004, the LEA exceeded its target and 42.5% pupils achieved GCSE A*-C grades: an improvement of 2.4% over the previous year's results. Although improving, attainment at Key Stage 4 remains well below in comparison to the national average and statistical neighbours. A high percentage of pupils attained at least one GCSE grade A*-G. Value added from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 is in the top quartile and the number of schools achieving below floor targets has reduced. However, black Caribbean boys consistently underachieve in all subjects. The council regards this as an unacceptable position and has set itself appropriate targets for improvement. The proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSE at grade A*-G is below the national average. Effective area wide partnership and collaboration has begun to improve outcomes for young people in the 14-19 age groups.

Effective implementation of strategies to improve attendance in targeted schools has resulted in reducing the rate of unauthorised absence below the national average for all pupils, including looked after children. However, the level of authorised absence remains high. This is due, in part, to the rigour demanded of schools in recording absence data accurately so that, for instance, holiday absence is always recorded as unauthorised. The declining rate of exclusions is to be welcomed. A new strategy for meeting the needs of hard to place young people is under consideration. Targeted multi-agency programmes have contributed to a significant improvement in the provision for the excluded pupils. However, an emphasis on suitable alternative educational placements results in too many pupils staying out of mainstream school for longer than a year. In comparison to the national and comparator group average, the proportion of pupils who are reintegrated into mainstream schools is very low.

In comparison to averages nationally and for comparator groups, a high number of primary schools were placed in special measures. In a small minority of schools, significant weaknesses have persisted for too long. Two more schools were identified as requiring special measures in 2004. The council has reviewed its arrangements for supporting school improvement and has adopted of a more proactive and robust stance.

The authority has successfully reduced the number of statements and the requests for statements continue to fall because of effective support given to schools.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are generally good. The council prides itself on the efforts taken to consult with young people and seek their views. The council has rooted future improvement in this outcome area in enhancing educational attainment.

Initial registration inspections highlight some challenges: equality; working in partnership with parents; and, behaviour issues in some of the childcare settings need to be addressed.

Levels of reoffending are lower than the national average, and first time offenders coming into the criminal justice system have also shown a recent reduction. Final warnings for children looked after are also reducing and at acceptable levels. The planned intervention with the target 'top 30 youths' is an innovative approach to addressing violent crime.

Transition from primary to secondary schools is supported by a mentoring scheme for vulnerable children. 75% of the Southwark Children's Fund supports users from the black and minority ethnic communities. There is a 16+ Supporting People scheme. Additional support is given to children with disabilities and children with special educational needs. 15 mentors deliver a job club for unaccompanied minors. Evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the various initiatives remains as a challenge to the council.

Ninety percent of vulnerable young people contribute to their social care reviews, and this is good. However, more attention needs to be paid to the impact of their contribution.

Challenges that remain, and recognised by the authority, include: further improved transition arrangements for children looked after out of borough; more rigorous attention to the transition planning and arrangements for children with disabilities; and, further work on helping those with ongoing mental health needs as they become adults.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are good and improving. Southwark has an effective 14-19 strategy and the partnerships work to the advantage of students. The 'Southwark Guarantee' and 14-19 Pathfinder provide coherence and promote a wide range of flexible opportunities for learners. Some innovative developments in this area have led to a significant improvement in achievement, participation, and an above average retention rate in full time education post-16. The quality of work-based learning has improved with the support of Learning and Skills Council and the Connexions service. Specific initiatives have successfully focussed on encouraging positive outcomes for

those with specific needs. Open days at the local universities and short courses targeted at 13-17 year old looked after children are examples of this.

Overall quality of information, advice, guidance, and support for young people is good. The college employs successful strategies to ensure adequate support for the more vulnerable pupils and those from black and minority ethnic groups. Support for young people with statements of special education needs or learning disabilities is successful in encouraging them to continue in education post-16. Timely transition reviews for pupils with special educational needs support their placement on appropriate Key Stage 4 programmes. The schools effectively identify young people at the risk of becoming disengaged and support their individual needs. Young people on E2E receive tailored support from personal advisers. Leaving Care Service' support given to care leavers is good. Nevertheless, looked after children achieve results below average and too many young people age 14-16 are without a school place. The considerable low performance of Black African and Black Caribbean students remains a cause for concern.

There is a clear recognition in council's strategic planning that improving the council's capacity to meet the needs of diverse needs is integral to improving the outcomes for all, and this is reflected in work in progress. The increased participation and staying on rate is not yet reflected in qualifications.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and young people • health needs of children looked after • clear priorities supported by targeted surveys • strong partnerships. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing teenage pregnancy rates • extending CAMHS • health of children with disabilities • substance misuse.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • joint strategic approaches • detailed action plan in response to the Children's Inspection • good performance indicators generally • effectively managed CP register • CP cases reviewed • impact of partnerships. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and young people's views of their own safety • impact of quality assurance systems • speed and quality of assessments and reviews • clarity concerning CP thresholds across organisations • more adoptions.

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expansion of services for children aged under five • reduction in the rate of unauthorised absence and improved attendance of looked after children • improvement in performance at Key Stage 3 • good partnerships and collaboration in providing for the education and training of young people aged 14-19. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the overall attainment of pupils across all key stages • the quality of child care in day care settings • differences in performance related to ethnicity • the proportion of pupils in alternative provision for longer than one year • the quality of educational provision for excluded pupils • support for schools and other educational and care settings causing concern.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consultation with young people • low levels of reoffending and reduction in young people convicted or warned • fewer children looked after warned or convicted • schools generally free from bullying, racism or harassment • high number of young people contribute to reviews. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transition arrangements for children with disabilities and those with ongoing mental health needs • transition arrangements for children looked after living out of the borough.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaboration with colleges in delivering post-16 education and training • the proportion of young people progressing to full time education or training. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of school places for children aged 14-16 • achievement of looked after children.

Service management

The self-assessment demonstrates good levels of partnership working and sound awareness of matters that need to be addressed. Improvement plans are founded on performance information that is generally good. These are coupled with increasingly sophisticated approaches to assessing needs in the context of developing consultative processes.

Very good progress is being made in moving to the integration of children's services. The recent appointment of the Executive Director of Children's Services (previously the head of Children's Social Care Services) marks a significant step forward in the process, not least, as she brings existing skills and determination to implement an improvement agenda to the work of education. Although plans are increasingly outcome focused, future self-assessments require clearer targets within the identified challenges.

Funding level indicators for children's social care reflect the council's commitment. Unusually for Inner London, recruitment and retention are not identified as a difficulty. Turnover, vacancy and sickness indicators are good.

There has been sufficient progress in education for responsibility to be handed back to Southwark council from the forthcoming academic year. The council is putting many of the significant building blocks in place with a sense of urgency to raise the attainment of all its children and young people. Recent school inspections have identified shortcomings in the quality of leadership and management of a significant minority of educational institutions. The strong leadership team of the council is well placed to respond in a consistent way to substantial challenges, and through the operational management group in education services, to break the legacy of low performance.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

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

- effectiveness and impact of the teenage pregnancy strategy.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

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

- quality of assessments and interventions
- understanding of CP thresholds across other organisations.

Enjoying and achieving

Early years provision promotes children's development and well-being and helps them meet early learning goals:

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

- standards of attainment and quality of provision for all pupils in Early years settings and across all key stages.

Making a positive contribution

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

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

- transition arrangements for children looked after and living out of borough, children with disabilities, and children with ongoing mental health difficulties.

Achieving economic well-being

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to achieve economic well-being:

- access and outcomes for children looked after not in education, employment or training.

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: London Borough of Southwark

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.	2
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