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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Mr Clive Webster  
Director of Children's Services  
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**1 December 2005**

Dear Mr Webster

## **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 6 July 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. Southampton City Council together with its partners in health and education has embraced the health needs of children within the city. The health needs of looked after children are met effectively and the council's performance exceeds the national trend, with all children having a documented health plan.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is a multi-agency initiative, which is providing a comprehensive and efficient service. Waiting time for non-urgent assessments has been reduced from 12 months to four weeks in Southampton West; referrals on the waiting list for specialist CAMHS have reduced from 37 to eight. This has been achieved through joint commissioning and the work of the Behaviour Resource Team together with the cross-agency 'Saucepans' project.

An increasing number of schools are gaining accreditation as healthy schools. Participation in sport is satisfactory for all and good for children in special schools. All schools comply with requirements to provide sex and relationships education. However, Southampton has a very high level of teenage pregnancies and sexually-transmitted diseases. The number of these is reducing and the city and its partners have established a Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board, the work of which is beginning to have a beneficial impact.

The authority recognises that it has a problem with child obesity and admissions of children to hospital A&E departments. It is working with parents and all the relevant

agencies, including school nurses, to reduce the incidence of unnecessary emergency admissions. Southampton also has a relatively high incidence of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties; this has been identified as a particular citywide priority that needs to be addressed and appropriate strategies are being put in place. One example is the Behaviour Resource Service, which provides multi-agency support to young people with serious behavioural and mental health needs.

## **Staying safe**

The overall outcome for children is good. The authority is working effectively with its partners to raise awareness and expectations about safeguarding looked after children and children in general.

There is a good multi-agency approach to child protection, including a new training programme. There are lead child protection officers in all schools, and the provision for care, welfare, health and safety is good in all secondary schools. All children on the child protection register are allocated a social worker. In 2004/05, 97.8% of these children had their reviews held on time. This was an improvement on the council's performance in the previous year, but it is still below the average for similar authorities.

In 2004/05, there was increase in the number of initial child protection conferences and in the rate of registrations and re-registrations. The council believed that this was due to cohort size and heightened awareness following training. Also an initial lowering of thresholds may have brought some families within the formal child protection system unnecessarily. In January 2005, the council decided to raise thresholds and revised procedures accordingly.

While the number of looked after children referred to the authority has decreased, the number of referrals leading to an initial assessment has increased. This, together with the reduced amount of re-referrals, indicates that the council is identifying and prioritising well the needs of children at the point of the initial assessment.

The percentage of core assessments completed in 2004/05 was good, but the incidence of such assessments was very low compared with similar authorities. The council believes that this is because initial assessments are carried out in depth and that a high threshold for core assessments runs the risk of disadvantaging some children. The council's plan is to increase very significantly the incidence of core assessments in 2005/06.

The council has performed well in relation to the short term stability of looked-after children. The longer term stability of looked after children has improved since 2002/03 and the council has plans to improve this further during 2005/06. In comparison with similar authorities, Southampton has a significantly higher number of looked after children placed at home with parents. The percentage of looked after children placed

for adoption during 2004/05 was low compared with similar authorities. However, once their best-interest decision to adopt has been made the council is performing well.

The authority recognises the need to reduce the number of children fostered outside the city's boundaries. 'Bridge to Fostering', which is a home for children with complex needs, was opened in 2004 to do this and to reduce the high cost of out-of-city placements. The authority is not experiencing any difficulty in recruiting foster carers.

In 2004/05, 83% of looked after children were allocated a named, qualified social worker; this was less than in the previous year and below the average for similar authorities. The authority's policy is to allocate some looked after children to an unqualified but extremely experienced social worker, who is supervised by a senior practitioner or team manager. This is contrary to the practice both nationally and within similar authorities, which is to increase the percentage of looked after children allocated a qualified social worker in 2005/06.

The council has worked with the police to develop a safe schools initiative, which is based on national best practice and integrated support from a range of agencies. Ten schools are accredited and 20 more are progressing towards accreditation. Work is still in progress to assess the impact of policies on black and minority ethnic children.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Overall, outcomes are good. The authority is making good progress from a low base, although pupils' performance is still below the national average and that of its statistical neighbours in some areas.

The quality of early years' provision is improving. Availability of places for under-fives is keeping pace with demand due to a significant increase in the number of childcare providers, especially out of school day care. However, the actions imposed at registration are higher than the national average, especially for full day care and child minding, and there are also weaknesses in aspects of full day care nursery education. These factors are likely to hinder children's progress towards the early learning goals.

The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and good at Key Stage 2. The authority is making good progress from a low starting point, but recognises that the performance of boys in English is unsatisfactory across both key stages. At Key Stage 1, this underachievement extends to mathematics as well. There has been good progress at Key Stage 2 with a significant increase in the number of pupils achieving National Curriculum Level 4 in the core subjects following a disappointing year in 2002/03. Results have also improved at Level 5.

Results at Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with those of the authority's statistical neighbours but below the national average, and the gap between the authority's

results and the national average is increasing. There has been a slow improvement in results for English and mathematics, but in 2004 results in science dipped to below the floor target, in line with the national trend. Pupils' attainment at GCSE A\*-G is good, although there is a 13% difference in attainment between boys and girls at GCSE A\*-C. Overall performance shows gradual progress since 2000. While still below the national average, standards are now higher than those in similar authorities.

The authority generally provides well for vulnerable pupils. It has a highly inclusive approach to pupils with special educational needs and other disabilities. There is effective targeted support for those at risk of underachieving and groups, such as traveller children, identified in the 2001 needs audit. There is good multi-agency support for looked after children of primary school age. In 2004, the number of these children leaving school with five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE was well above average. The number of looked after children who are absent from school is falling. The inspection of fostering services confirmed that their education is given a high priority.

There are good opportunities for enrichment in most of the authority's schools, including support for learning outside the school day. Consultation with pupils is good. The authority is making good progress in improving behaviour and the level of exclusions is low. However, attendance rates, especially at primary level, and the rate of reintegration of those out of school are well below average. The authority is aware of these issues and is putting in place suitable programmes to address them.

The authority makes particularly good use of data to analyse patterns of pupils' performance and support school improvement. As a result, it has made good progress in helping schools out of special measures or a similar category. Although the proportion of surplus places is relatively high, there is a programme to reduce places, and a record of school closures that matches the drop in pupil numbers.

### **Making a positive contribution**

Outcomes in this area are good. There is considerable evidence that the authority gives a high priority to involving young people in making decisions about their own future and contributing positively to the development of their community, as indicated in the Southampton Community Plan and through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

Most schools in the city have a school council. There is a newly formed Southampton City Youth Parliament, which has 85 young people from these various schools councils. The development of electronic voting is a particular feature of work financed by the Children's Fund as is the use of termly questionnaires to seek the views of young people. The Youth Parliament is also linked to various service user-groups representing vulnerable young people; its success is evident from the number of responses from looked after children when asked to contribute their views.

The Youth Justice Forum works well to co-ordinate much of the city's intervention strategy to reduce offending. However, the rate of final warnings and reprimands of looked after children, although reducing, is higher than its comparators and the national trend.

One in ten full day-care providers has weaknesses in the promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development and in working with parents. This is higher than the national average.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

Outcomes are good. The authority has a cogent strategic approach to promoting economic well-being which is having a positive impact. Its 14-19 Strategy is based upon a clear assessment of need. Widening participation is identified as a key priority, with targeted responses to support the most disadvantaged groups.

The number of young people, including care leavers, in education, training and employment is high; it is well above the national average and the authority's statistical neighbours. This is due to the improved quality of personal advice that young people receive and the effectiveness of the authority's partnership arrangements as a national 14-19 Pathfinder area. All looked after children either have their own individual pathway plan or one is being drafted. The recently expanded Connexions team works closely with young people with special needs or disabilities

Overall, the provision of education for 14 to 19 year olds is good. The number of schools with over 5% of their pupils leaving at 16 without qualifications is reducing. Standards and retention rates at the post-16 level are improving, but the authority recognises that more needs to be done in this area. The average points scores at GCE/VCE AS and A2 level are rising and well above those of the authority's statistical neighbours. All three post-16 institutions have recently achieved successful inspections; no school is deemed to have an inadequate sixth form.

The authority has recently decided to focus its resources on the most deprived wards. The creation of five neighbourhood partnerships provides a suitable framework within which the authority is planning to establish children's centres and extended schools, and there are sound systems in place to monitor the impact of this additional investment.

## SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• health of looked after children</li> <li>• interagency working</li> <li>• compliance of schools in terms of sex and relationships education</li> <li>• participation in sport, especially in special schools</li> <li>• number of schools gaining accreditation as Healthy Schools.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teenage pregnancies and rate of STIs</li> <li>• levels of childhood obesity and emergency admissions to hospital</li> <li>• numbers of children with behavioural and mental health problems.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interagency working in respect of child protection</li> <li>• provision for child protection, care, welfare, health and safety in all secondary schools</li> <li>• number of initial assessments</li> <li>• number of reviews and re-referrals carried out</li> <li>• stability of looked after children</li> <li>• adoption rate.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of core assessments</li> <li>• proportion of children with complex needs placed outside the authority</li> <li>• percentage of looked-after children allocated a qualified social worker.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• numbers of childcare providers and places</li> <li>• Key Stage 2 and GCSE A*-G results in 2004</li> <li>• inclusivity of approach to pupils with SEN/disabilities</li> <li>• multi-agency support for looked-after children and those at risk of under-achieving</li> <li>• performance of care leavers at GCSE 5+ A*-C</li> <li>• opportunities for enrichment including support for learning outside the school day</li> <li>• exclusion rate</li> <li>• use made of data to support school improvement.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for full day care nursery education and childcare providers at point of registration</li> <li>• boys' underachievement, notably at Key Stage 1 and GCSE</li> <li>• progress made by pupils between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4</li> <li>• levels of attendance, especially in the primary phase, and rate of re-integration of those educated out of school.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• multi-agency working to facilitate the involvement of all young people in discussions about their future and making a positive contribution to their community</li> <li>• percentage of looked after children who participate in statutory reviews and contribute views to service user-groups</li> <li>• co-ordination of intervention strategy to reduce offending by the Youth Justice Forum.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rates of final reprimands and convictions for looked-after children</li> <li>• numbers of full day-care providers where the promotion of PSE development and partnership with parents is unsatisfactory.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strategic approach to promote economic well-being, especially amongst the most disadvantaged groups</li> <li>• percentage of care leavers in employment, education and training</li> <li>• expansion of Connexions team working with young people with special needs</li> <li>• number of schools with pupils leaving without qualifications</li> <li>• attainment at GCE/VCE AS/A2 levels.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staying on rates.</li> </ul>

## Service management

The authority knows the strengths and weaknesses of its children’s services, how they can improve and how resources can best be used. Each service regularly undertakes a comprehensive needs analysis, which is co-ordinated by a core executive and planning group.

There are good procedures for consulting stakeholders, including young people, when determining priorities; the capacity to engage young people is developed through school council training. Good use is made of evidence from all the agencies and other local intelligence. The authority pays particular attention to its priority neighbourhoods and the data that have been collected in relation to these areas. It has worked closely with the relevant partners in setting challenging targets for improvement.

There is particularly good practice in education. Supported school self-evaluation and the annual performance review provide sound evidence to identify priorities for school development. However, the authority acknowledges that there needs to be greater consistency in its review procedures elsewhere.

The authority has responded well to the 2004 Children Act. It already had a children's and young people's strategic plan, and it has in place a process to produce a new one by April 2006. The Children and Young People's Partnership has adopted the priorities of the Southampton Community Strategy. The strategic planning process identifies key actions and responsibilities; this ensures clear accountability and the tracking of progress. However, the strategy needs to focus more on outcomes rather than processes to aid the assessment of impact and value for money.

The authority has good structures to support future development and to provide integrated support, especially for vulnerable groups. These structures should ensure continuity during the period when the new Director of Children's Services takes up his post.

In recent years, the authority has experienced difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff working with children and young people, which have detracted from the implementation of its policies in some areas. However, a number of innovative strategies are now in place and these are beginning to have an impact in dealing with this problem.

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

### **Being healthy**

*Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people:*

- measures to reduce teenage pregnancies, incidence of STIs, childhood obesity and emergency admissions to hospital.

### **Staying safe**

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

- measures to increase the number of core assessments of looked after children and work force issues related to the subsequent allocation of these children to unqualified social workers
- steps to reduce the number of children fostered outside the city's boundaries.



## Enjoying and achieving

*Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:*

- steps to improve attendance and attainment, especially of boys at Key Stage 3 and GCSE.

## Making a positive contribution

*Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:*

- measures to promote the personal, social and emotional development of children in day care and to reduce the incidence of final reprimands and convictions for looked after children.

## 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:*

- impact of the 14-19 Pathfinder project on improving post-16 staying on rates.

## 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: Southampton City 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>3</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