

9 December 2009

Ms Liz Nicholson
Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services
Shropshire County Council
Guildhall
Frankwell Quay
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Shropshire
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Dear Ms Nicholson

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating derives from a four point scale:

| | | |
|---|----------------------|---|
| 4 | Performs excellently | An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements |
| 3 | Performs well | An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements |
| 2 | Performs adequately | An organisation that meets only minimum requirements |
| 1 | Performs poorly | An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements |

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Children's services rating | Performs well (3) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|

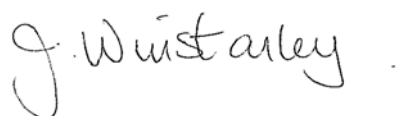
Children's services in Shropshire Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of a large majority of inspected and regulated services is good or better. Early years provision is good overall although child care is stronger relatively than that offered by nurseries and childminders. Secondary schools are mostly good but the area has a smaller proportion of primary schools that are good or better than seen nationally or in similar areas. Provision in the two sixth form colleges is good, and is satisfactory overall for school sixth forms where five out of nine are judged good or better. Both further education colleges are adequate. The large majority of inspection judgements for staying safe and enjoying and achieving are good or better.

The quality of provision for children whose circumstances have made them vulnerable is good. The joint area review in 2008 judged services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be good. Both special schools provide a good education and the pupil referral unit is outstanding. Two of the three children's homes were judged to be good at their most recent inspection and the other adequate. Although in 2007 the local authority's fostering and adoption services were judged to be adequate and private fostering arrangements inadequate, the joint area review in 2008 reported that there has been progress to bring about improvement and services for looked after children were good.

Performance against a large majority of national indicators is in line with or better than in similar authorities or the national figure. However, a third of indicators for staying safe show performance below similar areas, including the timeliness of assessments and stability of placements for looked after children. Indicators for enjoying and achieving are broadly in line with those in similar areas and the national figure. The gap in achievement between those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their peers is in line with similar areas.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA