

9 December 2009

Dr Sonia Sharp
Director, Children and Young People's Directorate
Sheffield City Council
Town Hall
Pinstone Street
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
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Dear Dr Sharp

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 adequately (2)
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Children's services in Sheffield City Council perform adequately.

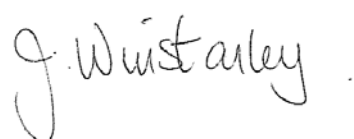
The overall effectiveness of around half of inspected services, settings and institutions is good or better. Performance in school sixth forms is above that found in similar areas and nationally. Inspection shows that nursery, primary and secondary schools, and the sixth form college do not perform as well as these types of provision in similar areas and nationally, although there was an improving trend for primary and secondary schools inspected in 2008/2009. The overall effectiveness of childminders and childcare providers is below that found in similar areas and nationally. Judgements for staying safe and for enjoying and achieving in inspected services are good or better in the large majority of cases.

The local authority's adoption and fostering services and children's homes perform well and are above comparators but the private fostering arrangements are adequate and below comparators. There have been three serious case reviews; all were carried out well and judged to be good. The local authority has had a recent unannounced inspection of its contact, referral and assessment arrangements. This identified some strengths and improvements, but also noted one area for priority action; some inconsistencies in the quality of social care assessments and practice were reported as an area for development. Of the 10 special schools within the authority all are good or outstanding. The performance of pupil referral units is not as strong with two satisfactory and one good.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators is at least in line with similar areas and national figures, although performance is not as strong for enjoying and achieving. This is particularly the case for achievement at age 11 when compared with national figures, and the achievement of children and young people from certain minority ethnic groups at age 11 and age 16.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA