

14 November 2008

Mrs Jill Baker
Strategic Director of Children's Services
Salford City Council
Children's Services Directorate
Minerva House
Pendlebury Road
Swinton
Salford
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Dear Mrs Baker

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Salford City Council 2008

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	2
Being healthy	2
Staying safe	2
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	2

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 2

Salford City Council delivers services for children and young people that are adequate overall. In three key areas, children’s services continue to make good contributions to improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people of the city. The council has sustained and improved upon the considerable improvements in educational outcomes for children and young people, particularly at age 16 and beyond, and the opportunities that young people have to shape the decisions that affect them. The quality of strategic planning in these areas is good and provides clear direction for sustained improvement. However, in 2007, the council’s services for supporting children and young people to stay safe were judged to be inadequate and the council subsequently received an external review and regular monitoring from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). At the time of this APA inspection, this monitoring is still underway. As a result of the DCSF intervention, the council has recognised the extent of the work to be done in children’s social care and, in recent months, has instigated wide ranging changes. There has been considerable change to the department’s systems and processes and some structural reorganisation to put the safeguarding aspect of the council’s work on a more secure footing.

Being healthy

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the admissible evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustained performance in delivering health services to children and families with improved outcomes in respect of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) ▪ The percentage of looked after children receiving health checks is better than in similar council areas. ▪ Good engagement of schools in raising health awareness and in the delivery of Healthy Schools. ▪ Good progress in reducing levels of substance misuse.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conception rates amongst 15 to 17-year-olds per 1000 population remain high and above those of comparable areas and England averages. ▪ Although clear strategies to reduce the rise in childhood obesity and to reduce dental decay are in place their impact has yet to be fully realised.

Staying safe

Grade 2

Current information indicates that the council has made progress in the area of staying safe. The staying safe grade is provisional, pending the outcome of the serious case review which is currently being completed. Once this has been completed and assessed, Ofsted will confirm the provisional grade or revise if necessary.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All child protection and looked after children cases are allocated and are reviewed within relevant timescales. ▪ Stability of looked after children's placements is good and improving ▪ Performance management arrangements are in place, including scrutiny by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rates of initial and core assessments, although improving, remain below those of statistical neighbours and England averages. ▪ Although strategies for the use of the common assessment framework are in place and there has been a major training programme, the full impact is yet to be realised in improving outcomes. ▪ Re-registrations are high compared to statistical neighbours and the national average. ▪ Despite a reduction in the number of children looked after from 122.2 per 1000 to 115 the rate remains significantly above statistical neighbours.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This is in line with the council's self-assessment. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the admissible evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council's success in closing the educational achievement gap at various stages: Foundation Stage, Key Stages 2 and 4 and, increasingly, post-16. ▪ The council's work in school improvement and its positive impact on improving the overall quality of education in the area; for example, the council currently has no secondary schools in an Ofsted category, a significant improvement on previous years, and increasing numbers whose overall effectiveness is rated as good or outstanding.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustained improvement in national test results, especially at Key Stage 4.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite improvements in attendance rates in secondary schools and the reduction in the number of secondary schools targeted by the DCSF for low attendance, persistent absence remains an issue in two secondary schools.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This is in line with the council's self-assessment. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the admissible evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Services are having a good impact in reducing first time offenders and performance here is above comparable areas and national averages. There has also been a significant reduction in anti-social behaviour by young people due to effective partnership working. ▪ Children and young people, including with those learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are given good support in making a positive contribution. ▪ There has been a marked improvement in youth services, demonstrating effective leadership in integrated and targeted youth support.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rate at which looked after children receive final warnings, reprimands or convictions is above that of comparable areas. Recent progress in reducing the rate has been minimal and it remains an area for further attention.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This is in line with the council's self-assessment. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the admissible evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The educational outcomes for 16 to 18-year-olds taking GCSEs/AS and A levels have improved considerably. The overall aggregated points score (APS) rose from 626.25 in 2006 to 1110 in 2007; a figure above that of similar councils and the national comparator. The overall APS for A Level also improved in 2007.

- Since 2004-5 there has been a significant increase in the number of young people completing an apprenticeship: from 2.5% in 2004-2005 to 67.1% in 2005-6, placing the area's performance above that of similar councils and the national comparator.
- The proportion of looked after young people, aged 16 engaged in employment, education and training is very good.
- The percentage of 16 to 19-year-olds not in employment, education or training fell in 2007-08 to 7.6% bringing it below that of similar councils but still that above the national average.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Despite improvements in the percentage of 18-year-olds achieving Level 2 qualifications, the percentage is still below similar councils.

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

Grade 2

The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people is adequate and its management of these services is adequate. The council's capacity to improve is strengthening but in staying safe the changes put in place as a result of the inadequate APA judgement in 2007 and the subsequent DCSF review are very recent and have not yet had time to become fully embedded. The council and senior officers have engaged positively with DCSF to bring about the changes required. The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive are exercising a direct and personal involvement in monitoring progress and in holding officers to account. They have a very clear vision of what they want to achieve, and have set realistic timescales for continued improvement. However, they also acknowledge that it will take more time before all strategies lead to outcomes which are in line with comparators. New senior officers and managers have been recruited to oversee the changes but some of these appointments are interim temporary and the new permanent Assistant Director for Safeguarding does not take up post until January 2009. At the time of this APA, this aspect of council's work is still being monitored by DCSF. There has been considerable change in systems and processes. The council is now fully aware of the extent of the challenges it faces in shifting the balance of services towards greater prevention and family support.

Major strengths

- Improvements in staffing levels for children's social care.
- Improving education outcomes.
- High percentage of residential social care workers gaining National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in health and social care.

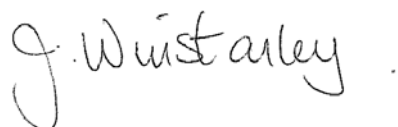
Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The senior manager appointed to drive forward safeguarding arrangements is due to take up her appointment in January 2009 and interim management arrangements for this area of work will begin to end. |
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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.

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.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection