

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
Email: [edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk)



Making Social Care  
Better for People



Mrs Jill Baker - Strategic Director of Children's Services  
Salford City Council

**1 December 2005**

Dear Mrs Baker

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

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 20 July 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. Services are making a consistently positive impact in an area with high levels of deprivation. Working relationships with health partners are a strength, resulting in a growing number of co-located Primary Care Trust services in schools, particularly special schools, with health workers on site. There has been above average investment in Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and work is continuing with health partners to review and improve community-based delivery of services, for example, by including CAMHS workers in new integrated early intervention teams. All schools recently inspected comply with requirements for sex and relationships education and over 90% are actively involved in promoting health. The council's local public services agreement target on young people's participation in sport has been achieved. Health support for looked after children through health checks and the engagement of appropriately trained staff is excellent. Measures to reduce teenage pregnancy are wide ranging; the strategies are sound and the capacity for improvement is promising. Whilst there has been demonstrable progress in reducing the number of conceptions over the last few years, the national target for 2004 is unlikely to be reached. This is acknowledged as an area for further improvement by the council and its partners.

## Staying safe

Outcomes have improved during the last year and are now generally good. Schools are effectively advised and supported in their safeguarding roles. School inspections show that the care and welfare of pupils and actions to keep them free from bullying, racism and harassment is at least satisfactory and is good or better in almost all primary schools. Initiatives to support more disadvantaged communities and families are enhanced by the deployment of six school-based police officers who work in secondary, special and primary schools, and a new post of school security adviser to work closely with the police on school security issues. Procedures for reporting racial harassment have been strengthened and have led to an increase in the number of reported incidents and subsequent action. Sure Start and children's centres have a clear prevention role, intervening early to support families and carers, and the extended schools strategy is well integrated with these initiatives.

Salford has historically had high levels of looked after children and the resourcing implications have hampered its ability to invest in preventive family support services resulting in lower thresholds for intervention. Action has been taken, including the introduction of family support teams, and the numbers of looked after children are stabilising, in contrast to the national trend. The new, integrated, locality based early intervention teams which come on stream in January 2006 should further reinforce and accelerate this shift. Good performance on the short-term stability of placements for looked after children has been sustained. The percentage of looked after children adopted in Salford and the timeliness of their placements have improved and are now good. The council's residential childcare provision is high quality and only a small number of looked after children are in residential care outside the Greater Manchester area because of their complex needs. Strenuous efforts to recruit more family placement carers in the city have been successful, but further increases are needed to ensure that more children and young people are accommodated locally in appropriate settings.

The council understands the reasons behind fluctuations in the figures relating to referrals, re-referrals and assessments for social care services in the last year and has systems in place to ensure that children and families at risk are identified and offered appropriate support. There was a very significant increase in the number of core assessments completed within timescale last year but further improvement is needed in the timely completion of initial assessments. Measures to protect children have improved. All children and young people on the child protection register are now allocated to an appropriately qualified worker and have had their cases reviewed within the required timescale. The authority audits a significant proportion of social work case files in order to monitor and improve the quality of its service and plans to increase this further. It takes proactive measures to protect looked after children, including appropriate action on complaints and concerns in children's homes and a rigorous system for recruiting adopters and family placement carers.

The authority is undertaking work with a range of agencies and stakeholders to strengthen procedures for the identification and tracking of all young people in the city, which is on target for completion by the required date of December 2005.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory overall. There are some significant strengths, most notably in early years and support for children and young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties. There are some early and encouraging indications of improvement, principally as a result of better targeting of support to particular schools and groups of children and young people. However, weaknesses in some aspects of support are having a disproportionate impact on more vulnerable pupils.

The quality of early years provision is good, reflecting the authority's long-standing priorities and partnership work, its well developed Early Years strategy and the ambitious programme of children's centres. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 have been in line with national averages and above similar authorities for some years. From Key Stage 1 onwards, however, attainment has been below national averages, though generally in line with that of similar authorities. Value added has been comparatively low, with a picture of overall attainment generally declining as children and young people move through their education to the end of Key Stage 4. This masks significant differences in the performance of individual schools. A third of secondary schools, for example, feature in the top 100 most improved schools nationally since 2001 and achievement, teaching and learning was good or better in around three quarters of primary schools inspected in 2003/04.

There are sound, and some innovative, strategies now in place to raise attainment. The restructuring and continuing integration of school improvement and support services and closer collaboration with other agencies is starting to improve outcomes. Better data and school self-review mean that challenge and support for schools is now based on more secure identification of need, and intervention properly targeted on those schools and groups of pupils who are underachieving. The Intensive Support Programme has resulted in some significant improvements in outcomes in targeted schools, and is now being extended more widely. Nevertheless, the proportion of schools in special measures remains twice that nationally and in similar authorities, and worsened in 2004. Whilst improved support means that these schools are now making adequate and in some cases good progress, just under a quarter of secondary schools and an equally high proportion of special schools and provision for excluded secondary age pupils still require special measures.

Attendance continues to be a stubborn problem and is below average in primary and secondary schools. However, services are tackling this firmly and increasingly effectively and the rate of improvement places the authority in the top 15% nationally. Despite improvements last year, permanent exclusions remain above average. This is resulting in a significantly higher proportion of pupils in pupil referral units (PRUs), and difficulties

over the managed moves process has led to low rates of reintegration of these pupils into mainstream schools. Strategies are now in place to address these problems, but have yet to be implemented fully and the authority is not monitoring systematically enough the relative impact of high levels of absence by looked after children and young offenders in PRUs.

There are sufficient school places. The authority recognises the need to address surplus school places in the primary sector but needs to take effective action to reduce the surplus. Children and young people have satisfactory access to a range of play and recreational activities including access to community sports and leisure facilities linked to new school building programmes. Access to these activities for looked after children and for children with disabilities is good.

Overall, the support given to looked after children and those with learning disabilities and difficulties to enjoy school and to achieve is good. The proportion of looked after children sitting general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) is high, and the percentage of these young people going on to gain one A\* to G grade is good, but the proportion attaining five or more A\* to G grades is still below average. Rates of exclusions of looked after children are low, but there has been a steady rise in the rates of absence of these children to well above the national average. The inclusion of children and young people with statements of special educational needs in mainstream education is increasing steadily and these pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress in most schools. The proportion of statements completed within the required timescales has improved dramatically. However, where other agencies such as health are involved, only around half are completed in time. The authority is rightly targeting improvements in inter-agency working as part of its moves to a children's trust.

### **Making a positive contribution**

Overall, outcomes in this area are at least satisfactory and in many respects are good. Generally, there is good support for children and young people in managing change and transition during their education. Childcare and nursery provision is good at working in partnership with parents and Key Stage 1 results reflect good transition and continuity in young children's performance. Support for transition between Key Stages 2 and 3 is also good: including the allocation of transition consultants and extended school provision. Links with post-16 learning providers are good. Consultation with looked after children and those with learning difficulties, and their direct involvement in key decisions affecting their future, including transition, is a significant strength. A very high proportion of looked after children participate in their statutory reviews. Children and young people are adequately consulted and listened to when key decisions affecting their future are made and are increasingly encouraged to participate in decisions on the planning and management of services and projects. Almost three quarters of schools have school councils where pupils are involved in issues regarding the development of the school, but the authority acknowledges that it needs to improve its monitoring of

how frequently the views of young people are gathered within schools, and its own use of that resource and information.

The management of inter-agency projects to support vulnerable and disaffected groups and maintain their engagement in education and in their community is generally good. Collaborative work with the police in schools and communities as part of the council's priority to tackle anti-social behaviour has remained strong but further action is needed to reduce the incidence of offending by looked after children. The proportion of supervised juveniles in employment, education and training has improved at a faster rate than nationally and is above average. However, it still falls far short of the services' target and the gap has recently widened. Reintegration of young offenders in schools has been most successful at Key Stage 3, but, at Key Stage 4 the truancy rates of young offenders is high, resulting in over half not accessing full-time equivalent education. There has been some reduction in offending by looked after children in comparison with other Greater Manchester authorities, but the rate remains relatively high.

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

Outcomes in this area are good. Very effective action has been taken to ensure that 14 to 19 education and training is good quality and is planned and delivered in a coordinated way. All local providers inspected in the last three years by Ofsted or the Adult Learning Inspectorate have been judged satisfactory or better. There is strong partnership and collaborative work with all providers and with Connexions and the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), leading to small but steady inroads in raising the proportion of young people in education and training, addressing the skills gap and increasing overall employment in the city. However, greater efforts are needed in order to achieve further improvements. The strategies are leading to a reduction in young people not in education, employment and training. Retention rates have also improved substantially in the last year and are now in line with the national average. Nevertheless, the local authority and the local LSC are aware that this continues to be a priority and a challenge. There is an extensive range of initiatives to address this and to raise the proportion of young people entering and sustaining vocational training and employment training in schools and post-16, backed by substantial funding from local LSC and other sources.

There is particularly effective support for children and young people who are looked after and with learning disabilities in order to maximise their life chances and well being. The Connexions service provides key workers for young people leaving care and for those leaving school identified as most vulnerable of dropping out of education, employment and training, and specialist workers support teenage parents and young people with housing problems. Transition arrangements for young people with disabilities, led by schools with Connexions and social worker involvement, are also strong and well linked with adult social care services. The council is engaging parents and carers of children with disabilities in more innovative forms of support, reflected in an increase in the level of direct payments.

## SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and the mental health of children and young people.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further reduction in teenage conception rates.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing children and young people with a safe environment</li> <li>child protection procedures and the collaboration of services to safeguard children and young people</li> <li>support for looked after children and those with learning disabilities and difficulties.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further reduction in thresholds for intervention</li> <li>further improvement in timescales for initial assessments</li> <li>increase in the proportion of looked after children in family placements.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the quality of early years provision</li> <li>attainment at Key Stage 1</li> <li>support to enable most looked after children and children and young people with learning disabilities and difficulties to enjoy school and to achieve</li> <li>actions to improve the capacity of services to ensure educational provision is good quality.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attainment at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4</li> <li>the quality of provision for those excluded from school and their reintegration to mainstream education</li> <li>support for schools causing concern</li> <li>the proportion of looked after children achieving five or more A* to C GCSEs</li> <li>levels of attendance, particularly of looked after children and youth offenders</li> <li>the proportion of all statements of special educational needs issued within required timescales</li> <li>reduction in surplus places in primary schools.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support to looked after children and children and young people with learning disabilities and difficulties to decisions and management of changes in their lives</li> <li>involvement of children and young people in planning service provision.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further reduction in offending by looked after children.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaboration with the local LSC and other partners in delivering post-16 education and training</li> <li>• the range and quality of 14-19 provision</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing the participation of young people post-16 in education, training and full-time employment</li> </ul>
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## **Service management**

There are clear and challenging ambitions for the area and local agencies and stakeholders share common objectives for children and young people. The re-structuring of council services to create a Children's Services Directorate, with health partner involvement, has benefited from clear political direction and support and is well advanced. The new management structure is radical and far-sighted and builds on proven capacity of many senior officers. Transition arrangements for September 2005 are well planned. The priorities of the new service are aligned with coherent corporate and service plans. There is proven and effective partnership working.

At service level, strategies to tackle educational underachievement are now securely based on clear audit and prioritisation of service support, targeted to need and underperformance by specific schools or groups of pupils. Social care outcomes as measured by performance indicators have shown improvement from last year in almost all areas. Regulatory inspection demonstrates strong management of services for looked after children, with active direction and leadership from the Director of Community and Social Services and the Lead Member. The council has a strong record of revisions of services using, for example, Best Value Reviews. There are improved performance management mechanisms in place, which include staff at an individual and team level.

There is evidence of substantial improvement in financial management over the last few years and this is now sound. Budgets for both education and social care were balanced last year. Personal social services expenditure on children and families is well above the average and the council spends above its formula funding share for education. The council is working to achieve a further shift away from spending on intensive interventions for children and young people in residential care and towards preventive family support services.

Whilst progress is generally good, the rate of improvement in some areas is not yet impacting fully on outcomes for all children and young people, for example, in the quality of all educational provision, and in helping some vulnerable young people, including looked after children, to be in school and to achieve. The corporate Human Resources Strategy recognises the risks to successful outcomes posed by recruitment and retention difficulties in key skill areas. Though there is early evidence that the council's action is resulting in some improvements, the situation is particularly acute in children's field social workers and in the recruitment of additional family placement

carers. Investment in training of children's social care workers is also below the national average.

Measures to assure the quality of services would benefit from further extension, for example, case file audit for looked after children in all settings. Further work on measuring and demonstrating impact of service developments will enable the council and its partners to review and refine priorities and means of achievement. Overall, capacity to improve is good.

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

### **Being healthy**

*Action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health:*

- accessibility, appropriateness and timeliness of response for children and young people with mental health needs.

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

- progress on integration of services for children with disabilities and their carers.

### **Staying safe**

*Services are effective in establishing the identity and whereabouts of all children and young people 0-16:*

- adequacy of arrangements to identify and track children and young people in the city.

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

- proportion of looked after children in family placement and adequacy of monitoring arrangements for all looked after children placed outside the area.

*The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:*

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

- evidence of shift towards earlier intervention thresholds.



## **Enjoying and achieving**

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

- evidence of improvements in attainment at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 in 2005
- evidence of the impact of the support and intervention by the School Improvement Service for secondary schools in Special Measures and other schools causing concern.

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

*Educational provision is made for children who do not attend school:*

- impact of initiatives to improve attendance and the implementation of new strategies to re-implement the 'managed moves' process, reduce high exclusions, improve levels of re-integration and reduce pressures on alternative provision (PRUs).

*Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:*

- impact of strategies to raise the attainment of looked after children and improve their attendance.

## **Making a positive contribution**

*Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:*

- coherence of consultation processes with children and young people and evidence of impact on services.

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

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

- evidence of impact of measures to reduce offending by 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 initiatives to raise the proportion entering and sustaining vocational training and employment training in schools and post-16.

## **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: Salford 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>2</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>2</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