

26 November 2007

Mr Terry Piggott  
Executive Director of Children, Schools and Families  
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council  
Municipal Offices  
Smith Street  
Rochdale  
OL16 1YD

Dear Mr Piggott

## **2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN ROCHDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. 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.

### **Overall effectiveness of children's services**

**Grade 3**

Rochdale Council consistently delivers services for children and young people at a good level. Through strong partnership working, far-sighted strategic planning and an increasingly sharp focus on outcomes, Children and Young People's services are striving successfully to make continuous improvements. Rapid progress has been made towards developing broad-based and extensive opportunities for all young people aged 14 to 19. There have been some marked improvements in educational standards and outcomes for looked after children and young people. The council recognises the need for further improvement in attainment, particularly at Key Stage 3 and Level 3. Overall capacity for improvement is outstanding.

### **Being healthy**

**Grade 3**

#### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council has developed a range of strategies in partnership with other agencies to improve the health of children and young people across the borough. The relationship with the Primary Care Trust is a strength and the senior management teams are committed to reducing health inequalities in the area.

The work of children's centres and midwifery services has helped to increase breast-feeding rates overall and, although there has been a decrease in Heywood and Middleton this year, they are still higher than in similar areas. Immunisation rates by second and fifth birthdays are all better than national figures and in line with or slightly better than those of the council's statistical neighbours. Infant mortality rates show a year-on-year decrease between 2003 and 2005 and although a little higher than England overall, are below those of comparator councils. Perinatal mortality has fallen steadily from 1999 and is below that of similar areas. Although the deaths of children under 15 were higher than expected, they are still below those of similar areas. The figures for decayed, missing and filled teeth remain above average. This is a priority for the partners, with a clear focus on early intervention from birth.

The number of schools that have achieved the national Healthy Schools standard is above the national average. The council has been awarded beacon status for their work in this area. Children say that they are leading healthier lifestyles. A survey carried out in schools across the borough showed that 45% of children and young people in 2001 said they had never smoked and this rose to 54% in 2006. 35% of children and young people in 2001 said they had drunk alcohol in the last week as opposed to 28% in 2006. Opportunities to participate in physical activity have improved for all children and young people. The proportion of children and young people between five and sixteen who participate in high quality physical education and sports for at least two hours a week is above the council's target. A multi-agency project group has been established to focus on reducing obesity levels and there are currently 80 families participating in a programme to help them adopt healthier lifestyles.

Health promotion is targeted effectively at vulnerable groups of children and young people. The proportion of looked after children and young people who have regular health assessments and dental treatment has improve significantly in the last year and is now in line with that of comparator areas and above national figures. The last fostering inspection judged the health care of children and young people in foster care to be good.

Teenage conception rates for 2005 show an 18.2% reduction from base rate. This is much better than either the national situation or that found in similar areas. However, recognising that the rates have levelled out, the council has reorganised some of its service delivery. Based on the advice of young people, the council is now targeting its work more effectively by moving away from the use of sexual health clinics, making better use of the youth service and schools and working with parents to promote sexual awareness and education. A nationally accredited programme on sexual well-being awareness has been adapted to be culturally appropriate for parents of minority ethnic heritages.

A high number of young people use the easy to access Early Break drug service. The numbers of young people using class A drugs has reduced significantly in the last eight years due to the range of early interventions. There is a specific service for young people of Asian heritage that has been successful in engaging them and addressing their drug use. A high number of assessments of young people for

substance misuse and treatment interventions are completed within timescales that are better than those found in comparator councils or nationally.

Progress has been made towards a comprehensive Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) with developments in line with similar councils and the national situation. Access to services for those with more severe mental health problems has been enhanced. The Across Pennine Inreach/Outreach service helps families to try and prevent the need for admission to hospital or supports early discharge if hospitalisation is necessary. CAMHS performance in relation to waiting times for non-specialist and specialist support are better than or in line with similar areas.

### **Area for development**

- Reduce the numbers of children aged five to 14 with decayed, missing or filled teeth.

## **Staying safe**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Safeguarding arrangements for children and young people have shown good improvement since the last annual performance assessment. The referral process has been clarified and the numbers of referrals are now in line with previous years. The numbers of initial assessments have increased and those completed within timescales have risen consistently to well above national and comparator authorities. Completion of core assessments has also increased sharply from 2005–06 and is above other areas. All children and young people on the register have a named social worker and all have their cases reviewed within timescales. The number of children and young people subject to an initial child protection conference has risen well above the figure for last year and is now in line with the national position and similar areas. The council reports that its data last year did not accurately reflect activity so it has clarified the process with staff and is confident that figures are now accurate. Robust monitoring of safeguarding processes and the delivery of early intervention services to families has ensured that only those children and young people most at risk become subject to child protection plans. Re-registrations are kept at a relatively low level; this is indicative of effective practice. Safeguarding thresholds have been agreed with all partners and guidance written. Extensive publicity and a period of training that will last until the end of 2008 is designed to raise awareness of safeguarding issues and help to ensure appropriate referrals in the future. Work is also being undertaken with the Imams at the Madrassahs to engage them in the issues. The numbers of child protection conferences held within timescales is much higher than for similar areas.

Looked after children and young people have secure and safe placements. High numbers live in foster care or adoptive placements. Both short and long term placement stability is good compared to national rates. There has been an improvement in the number of children and young people adopted to above both the national figure and that for similar areas. All looked after children and young people have a named qualified social worker and most have their cases reviewed in a timely manner. All care leavers have a personal adviser but, although the number with a pathway plan has increased from last year, it is still below that of similar areas.

### **Area for development**

- Increase the number of care leavers with a pathway plan.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Children are getting a sound start to their education. In most cases school inspections judged quality and standards in the Foundation Stage to be at least good, a similar situation to that in comparator authorities. However, while other early years settings were found to be at least satisfactory and none was inadequate, the proportion of good provision is well below that found nationally. There is a clear difference in the level of skills developed by children in the most and least deprived areas of the borough. The location of six new children's centres is well considered both with regard to closing this gap and in further enhancing development of the successful extended school hubs.

Standards at Key Stage 1 are similar to those of comparator authorities but below the national average, a position that provisional results indicate has been maintained in 2007. In 2006, Rochdale was ranked as the most improved local authority at Key Stage 2 for the second year running. The progress made by children and young people at Key Stage 2 has increased so that standards reached are broadly average in the core subjects. There have been marked rises in the standards reached in English and mathematics by Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage children and young people. The attainment of looked after children and young people is above the national average for this group. Provisional results for 2007 show that improvements at Key Stage 2 have been sustained. However, although the authority's progress towards meeting its target for raising schools above the floor target is more rapid than anticipated, a small number of schools remain below this threshold.

At Key Stage 3 standards are below the national average in English and mathematics and well below in science. In English, results remained in line with those of comparator councils: in mathematics and science they fell to below this marker. Provisional figures for 2007 indicate a broadly similar picture. However, overall secondary pupils make good progress. Improvements in the progress made by Pakistani heritage children and young people mean that they are now the highest achieving group. GCSE results have been rising, albeit at a slower rate than for

statistical neighbours or nationally. No schools fall below the floor target. In 2006 there were good improvements in GCSE results for boys of Pakistani heritage. Unvalidated 2007 figures show a marked rise in the proportion of young people gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, with the council exceeding its target. The proportion of looked after children and young people who entered and gained at least one GCSE is well above the national average. This is a sustained trend and the authority exceeded its target. However, no looked after children and young people gained five or more good GCSE passes in 2006 and only one achieved this in 2007. Inspection findings indicate that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in all phases make at least good progress.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of schools inspected during the year is at least good. An effective and well targeted school improvement strategy has ensured that schools causing concern have been removed from formal categories at or prior to the expected time. Moreover, no schools have been placed in a category of concern during the year. The only school in a category was making satisfactory progress at the time of its monitoring inspection. The authority has successfully melded an inclusive approach to meeting children's special needs, a programme for new school buildings and a timely reduction in primary surplus places.

School inspections indicate that there are strengths in children and young people's personal development, well-being and notably in their enjoyment of learning. In the overwhelming majority of schools inspected, behaviour was found to be at least good. Nonetheless, exclusions remain higher than found nationally. However, in secondary schools in the behaviour improvement programme there has been a significant reduction both in permanent exclusions and in days lost due to fixed term exclusions. Attendance, including that of looked after children and young people, is broadly in line with the national picture. As a consequence of a wide range of measures, the authority is on track to meet its target for the reduction of absences which are above the level found nationally. Substantial progress has been made in streamlining the way in which children and young people missing from education are tracked.

### **Areas for development**

- Improve the quality of early years provision.
- Raise standards at Key Stage 3.
- Increase the number of looked after children who gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C.

## **Making a positive contribution**

**Grade 4**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. There is a strongly embedded culture of consultation with and participation by children and young people, both generally and specifically

involving more vulnerable groups. The council has produced a toolkit to help services empower the young people they work with. Young people have been consulted on a wide range of issues over the past twelve months including the Play Strategy, leisure facilities, and child health provision. Their views are taken into account. For instance, the design and fitting of the new CAMHS base reflects young people's requirements and opinions. The work of the Early Break drug service in schools is a direct result of requests from young people for help in this area. Looked after children and young people can join the Listen Up group to discuss issues particularly relevant to them. This group meets regularly with councillors who are part of the corporate parent's forum. Young carers are developing a group of their own to increase their participation in decision making and ensure that the issues affecting them are taken into account. Young people are involved in youth councils and the youth parliament. The youth council is represented on local, regional and national groups including the Rochdale Leisure Trust and the Independent Police Complaints Commission. Two former members of the youth parliament are now councillors. The Youth Opportunity Fund Panel, with representatives of all children and young people, including asylum seekers and young carers, has successfully allocated a considerable amount of funding. There are plenty of opportunities for young people to become involved in volunteering: the volunteering scheme has been particularly successful at engaging young Asian women. School inspections judge that children and young people's positive contribution is good or better in more than 80% of schools; this is in line with comparator areas.

Vulnerable children receive good support from a range of agencies. Learning and behaviour mentors provide individual support for children and young people in schools to help them overcome social and emotional barriers. There is a service for young carers run by the Family Welfare Association. Looked after children and young people have access to an independent advocacy service and a substantial number take this up. A very high number of young people communicated their views at their statutory reviews, above the average nationally and in similar areas. Most young people with disabilities have transition plans to ensure continuity of care. Parents are encouraged to support their children and a significant number have been involved in parenting courses and projects run by a range of agencies.

The ratio of youth workers to young people is slightly above the national average; the number of young people reached by the youth service is in line with national targets. There has been a range of effective multi-agency strategies employed to reduce anti-social behaviour. These include support for parents in dealing with difficult teenagers and problems associated with alcohol and substance misuse. Intensive support for young people at risk of offending has resulted in a reduction in the number causing trouble in hot spots. As a consequence the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system has reduced significantly to a figure that is better than average. There are more supervised juveniles in full time education, employment or training than in similar areas. Targeting of persistent offenders by the police and youth offending team has seen a reduction in the re-offending rates that needs to be sustained over time. Final warnings and reprimands of looked after



children and young people are very low compared to similar areas and national figures.

### **Area for development**

- Continue to reduce re offending rates.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council has established a comprehensive and coherent 14–19 strategy and good working partnerships with and between the college, schools, work-based learning providers, and the Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council. The rapid development of a culture of collaboration contributed significantly to the successful bid for a new sixth form college; the central feature of a wide-ranging plan to broaden and improve the relevance and accessibility of the offer for young people in Rochdale. Priorities are well-founded on a thorough needs analysis. Partnership arrangements and structures, including those of the four geographically based 14–19 consortia, are fit for purpose and efficiently supported by the council.

A substantial improvement in the life chances of young people is sought from the strategy. The percentage of young people achieving Level 2 by age 19 is below that found in similar areas and nationally and falls well short of the council's target. Standards at Level 3 are well below those of comparator authorities and the national figure. Progression to Level 2 at age 16 has risen and is good but this is not sustained to Level 3. Through the consortia, increased opportunities for vocational education are provided for 14- to 19-year-olds. There has been a substantial rise in the percentage of young people completing apprenticeships. School inspections found that most secondary schools offer a good curriculum. The introduction of five specialist diplomas in 2009 will further enhance opportunities.

The proportion of young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, not in education, training or employment is broadly in line with similar authorities but above the national figure. The council has put a suite of appropriate measures in place to re-engage these young people. The percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training is well above that found in comparable areas and nationally. In its role as corporate parent the council provides good support and incentives at transition, including a number of work experience placements. In addition, all care leavers are living in suitable accommodation. The availability of flexible childcare and good interagency working has led to a rise in the percentage of teenage mothers accessing education, employment or training to well above levels found both in similar areas and nationally. Participation in a national pathfinder has enabled the council to gain a clear view of sufficiency in childcare provision and to put in place appropriate measures to stimulate the market where required.

## Area for development

- Raise standards at Level 3.
- Increase the percentage of young people remaining in education at age 17.

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

Grade 4

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's capacity for improvement is outstanding. There is much to illustrate the Audit Commission's 'Direction of Travel' statement that the council is improving well. For instance: the rise in Key Stage 2 results to national levels; this year's increase in GCSE results to above target; increased timeliness of assessments; and better outcomes for looked after children and young people. The council has forged highly effective partnerships to drive forward innovative, multi-faceted strategies designed to deliver major improvements, such as the 14–19 strategy. Incisive, determined leadership is key in the strong partnership working at senior strategic level. Success in attracting considerable additional funding illustrates confidence in this.

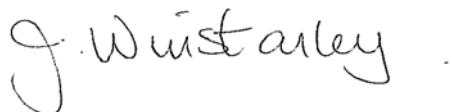
The review of the first year of the Children and Young People's Plan is thorough, demonstrating effective use of performance information. From it arise priorities for the next stage in realising the challenging targets set for 2010. The clear planning lines that underpin the Children and Young People's Plan are appropriate to ensure that successes are built on and shortfalls addressed. Plans are informed by high quality consultations with a wide variety of young people, including vulnerable groups. The unequivocal strategic direction is being developed at the operational level through continuous improvements to organisational structures. These include robust performance management and well-considered succession planning. Commissioning is developing with a keen focus on outcomes for children and young people embedded in the process.

The council is committed to an integrated approach to meeting the needs of children and young people and this is a developing feature of service delivery. To accelerate progress with this, lead officers have been appointed to facilitate this key change in working perspective and method. It is supported through mechanisms such as common induction procedures for staff, a multi-agency approach to professional development, and some agreed information sharing protocols. In a number of areas resources have been pooled to provide well-targeted integrated services for children and young people. The opportunity for new ways of working has been grasped firmly in the formation of virtual multi-agency teams.



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.

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" and a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager  
Local Services Inspection