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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Ms Phillips

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN RICHMOND-UPON-THAMES

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local 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.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

Richmond upon Thames continues to deliver a good service to children and young people. Improvements have been made in relation to all the Every Child Matters outcomes since last year's APA, particularly in areas of participation and economic well-being. Areas identified for development are being addressed well through effective planning and carefully targeted action. Key staff know the children who are looked after very well because they are small in number and their progress is monitored effectively through flexible partnership arrangements.

Leadership of the council is good. Key personnel have responsibility for each Every Child Matters outcome and they have a clear, shared vision for future improvement based on accurately identifying strengths and weaknesses of the council's work. The Children and Young People's Plan shows good strategic planning and a commitment to productive partnerships. Clear leadership and creative, rigorous approaches to financial planning ensure that the council has good capacity to improve further.

Being healthy

The contribution of the council to outcomes in this area is good. Children and young people in Richmond are generally healthy. Partners work well together to offer coordinated approaches, with a focus on early identification of risks to health for vulnerable groups. Wherever possible, services go out into the community giving greater access to those who may not travel or actively seek advice from health professionals. As a result, professionals are not only able to engage more frequently with vulnerable individuals and groups in relation to their health, but are also able to direct them to additional services and activities within the council for the well-being of the whole family.

Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported through transition to adulthood. This is because, at critical times, the use of joint protocols is effective in ensuring prompt access to and consistency across different services. The Primary Care Trust has recently canvassed the views of families of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and identified areas where services might improve further. Procedures for monitoring the health of children and young people who are looked after by the council are good, ensuring that their health needs are adequately checked, assessed and tracked. A dedicated nurse for looked after children works in partnership with the Youth Offending Team and Adolescent Team. This partnership works very well, ensuring regular contact and assessment of individual health needs. Good additional support is given to the traveller community for nutritional advice, immunisation and to discourage smoking.

A broad variety of local partnerships and activities have been developed to raise awareness of sexual health such as 'mystery shopping', a sexual health website and the Health Campaign Forum. This gives good additional access to services and information to those who might not otherwise seek advice. Teenage conception is reducing and is now the lowest in London.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service is multi-disciplinary in composition. Whilst there is continuing good progress towards coordinated services, the council acknowledges

the need for further improvement to ensure that all services are fully integrated and working from the identified needs of individuals and groups. A comprehensive strategy for the development of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services over the next three to five years is being developed. Good links exist with family support and the Youth Offending Team. All young offenders assessed as having mental health needs are seen within nationally agreed timescales, which is well above national averages and for those who receive a sentence, a range of health and educational needs are assessed within 24 hours. Health Visitors provide a universal programme on parenting, behaviour management and mental health issues in the pre-school years and work effectively to promote healthy lifestyles within the community. A Saturday morning immunisation clinic provides working parents with access to good facilities. Other facilities include the Breast Feeding Café which works well in partnership with the National Childbirth Trust in Richmond. School nurses provide Open Door Clinics in all secondary schools enabling all students to access good informal support for their well-being and mental health needs.

There is good strategy to promote healthy school meals and the Healthy School award is the major strength, with a higher than average number of schools achieving the standards. The council has established that the number of children aged eight or under who are overweight is half the national rate. Although there are currently no designated services to support those who may be at risk of being obese, the council is in the process of developing a local strategy.

Staying safe

The council is making a good contribution towards ensuring that children and young people are safe. The Local Safeguarding Children Board has been in place since April this year. It has representation from relevant agencies with good links to the Children and Young Peoples' Strategic Partnership and clear, regular reporting procedures. This ensures a high profile for the safety of children and young people within the borough. The council has a clear commitment to free multi-agency training courses on safeguarding children and their families as demonstrated by providing almost 500 training days last year. Early intervention strategies are in place to identify and track vulnerable groups, such as young mothers and potential offenders, reducing risk. This includes the work done by the Hard to Place Pupil Panel and Pastoral Support Programmes. The council has good systems in place to locate children and young people who are missing from education. This results in successful collaborative working between agencies such as the Pupil Referral Service, Education and Social Services. The road safety strategy works effectively to reduce accidents through a comprehensive range of programmes, particularly in primary schools and with traveller communities. Anti-bullying and restorative justice programmes offered to some schools are working well and will be extended to all secondary schools over the coming year.

There is continued good performance in the care and support provided to looked after children. The numbers of children and young people on the Child Protection Register and the numbers of looked after children have stabilised over the past year. There is very good performance for core assessments being completed on time and most initial assessments are also completed on time, showing a slight improvement from last year.

Placement stability is generally high but a large percentage of looked after children are placed outside of the borough, due to a lack of provision. The council has already recognised this as a priority and is taking suitable steps to increase the number of in-borough foster carers. A recent initiative successfully encouraged potential carers to come forward for assessment. All foster carers received Safer Caring training in the past year, enabling them to keep up-to-date with council policy and good practice. No children who were de-registered have been on the Child Protection Register for more than two years. The Adolescent Resource Team provides good help to families, successfully reducing numbers of older children coming into the care of the council.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution that the council makes to ensuring that children and young people achieve well at school and enjoy their education and leisure activities is good overall, but with some variation between different age groups. Provision for early years education continues to be good across a range of settings in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors, providing good support for children in meeting the national early learning goals. Trends and standards are consistently good within Key Stages 1 and 2, often well above average, with evidence of further improvement in 2005 for the proportion of those achieving Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2. The number of children achieving Level 5 for English, mathematics and science continues to be well above national averages. GCSE results are slow to improve, with a decline in standards and progress over the past three years.

The amount of progress that children and young people make according to their starting points is generally in line with national expectations but reduces as children get older. Girls outperform boys increasingly at Key Stages 3 and 4. The progress made by children and young people with learning difficulties or disabilities is improving, as it is for looked after children, although few achieve higher grades for GCSEs. Achievement for older children from some black and minority ethnic groups is not as good as that of other groups of learners. This pattern of achievement has remained the same for some time and remains a priority for the council.

The council recognises the need to provide more challenge to secondary schools and has taken decisive action to put intervention programmes in place for seven out of eight secondary schools. However targets were not met in 2005 because programmes to improve standards in English and mathematics have not been in place long enough to make a positive difference to standards. There was some improvement in standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT) as a result of successful intervention programmes. Clear, well-thought through strategies are in place to address identified weaknesses in the quality and effectiveness of tracking and the use of data in secondary schools, and the council is rightly confident that this will have a positive impact over the next year. The council also recognises that although pupils do well overall in the primary years there are areas of underachievement to be addressed such as the progress of boys and those reaching higher levels of work. The council has provided effective, well-targeted support for schools causing concern. There are currently no schools in Ofsted

categories of concern although the council has identified four schools that require additional support.

The council successfully promotes the education of looked after children with a dedicated team, which includes an education facilitator. The progress, attendance and engagement of this group are closely monitored and well-targeted. For example, when looked after children are absent from school, the welfare call system ensures a prompt response. The educational achievements of the small group that finish compulsory education each year are improving.

Periods of fixed term exclusions are in line with national averages but above average for permanent exclusions. However, there is evidence that the council's strategies to tackle exclusions have been effective as the number of exclusions has reduced over the past three years, halting an upward trend. Attendance improved slightly in 2005 but is better in primary than secondary schools. These improvements are the result of well-targeted support to individuals, particularly through multi-agency work such as the 'Self Esteem through Sport' project. By successfully engaging vulnerable young people in positive community activities, school attendance also improves.

The council's approach to vocational training is emerging as a real strength, with a positive impact on learners' participation and enjoyment of education, as well as on longer term prospects for employment and further training. The Learning and Skills Council is represented on the Partnership Forum and is working effectively with the council to improve post-16 provision and work-related learning.

The council continues to build effectively upon the good range of extra curricular and leisure activities within the community as reported last year. Particular attention is given to successfully engaging those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who are vulnerable or hard to reach. As a result, families are provided with good support as well as the children and young people themselves. Creative and effective use is made of funds to support and sustain activities.

Making a positive contribution

The contribution that the council makes to this area is outstanding. Outcomes are excellent and contribute significantly to the health, safety, education and employment of children and young people, particularly those that are vulnerable. The strength of the council's work lies in the way in which services and partners create support packages by working effectively together to meet the identified needs of individuals or groups. Very successful multi-agency partnerships also enable services to work preventatively as well as responding to current need. Opportunities for children and young people to contribute positively often involve local contexts and shared funding arrangements between services effectively ensure that resources are well-targeted. The national 'Hear by Rights' initiative is being used effectively to gain children and young people's views and the Director publicly endorses the importance of giving children and young people a strong voice by meeting regularly with representatives from many different groups to discuss relevant and current issues.

Fewer children and young people are committing offences that result in court appearances. However, those that do are increasingly likely to re-offend and as part of the council's decisive action to tackle this, a good programme of well attended activities is in place for those at greatest risk of offending, focussing on holiday times and evening activities. This strategy has had a positive impact on the reduction of crime in some priority areas. The council has one of the top performing Youth Offending Teams in London. It has made particularly good progress with engaging young offenders in education and training. This is to be extended with additional funding through the Local Public Service Agreement to appoint a key worker who will work exclusively with young people identified at risk of re-offending.

Particular attention is given to the needs of looked after children and those with learning difficulties or disabilities, successfully enabling them to participate positively within the community. A young person looked after by the council is a senior member of the Youth Parliament; this provides a strong voice for children and young people in the borough. Those children and young people who do not attend statutory reviews have the opportunity to participate outside formal meetings if they wish to. Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children have fallen as a result of the effective and well-targeted work of Connexions and the Cultural Pathfinder.

Achieving economic well-being

The council makes an outstanding contribution to children and young people's economic well-being and has built upon the success reported in last year's APA. Once again this is as a result of very good arrangements for partners to work together with a clear focus on identified need and prevention work to reduce the risk of unemployment. Priority is given to vulnerable groups and services work successfully to provide individual support packages. The council operates a strong panel to drive forward issues of economic well-being. The panel members are well informed, make well judged corporate decisions and know their strengths and areas for development very well.

Schools prepare students well for the world of work and further education. Increasing numbers of young people access vocational courses and flexible learning arrangements and this is having a positive impact on those who go on to employment within the authority. As a result of good tracking and collaboration with 14-19 partners targets for young people engaged in education and training have been exceeded. The Youth Offending Team is very effective in re-engaging young offenders in education and employment through its productive relationship with partners in education and leisure, and also as a result of successful preventative work with families. The council works effectively with the Learning and Skills Council, integrating resources to target the right priorities. Current priorities include strategies developed with employers which aim to improve the range and quality of work related learning opportunities. Youth employment amongst its own workforce is a priority for the council and young people who are looked after are provided with good opportunities to take up work based placements with the prospect of full employment. Good provision is made for young people with learning difficulties or

disabilities to take advantage of opportunities for employment, training or further education as appropriate. Connexions advisors track students, attend reviews and offer job seeking skills.

The council operates a strong mentoring system in collaboration with two secondary schools, and has plans to increase this further. The mentoring programme is successful in motivating young people through regular contact and engagement in positive community activities.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

The council makes an effective contribution to maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people and has good potential for further improvement. The council is very aware of its strengths and priorities. There is a good, clear and strategic Children and Young People's Plan with ambitious targets for service improvement, although the delivery against those targets shows a mixed picture. For example, policies on road safety, the Youth Offending Team 'prevention agenda' and the development of creative arts and leisure are making a positive difference to the life-chances for children and young people in the borough, whilst actions taken to improve the educational progress for some groups of pupils have yet to show improvement. Strategies for the commissioning of services and the development of Children's Trusts have not yet had sufficient time to develop fully.

The council has made good progress in establishing a single directorate for Children's Services. A lead member for children services has been appointed and, as a result of the council's effective action to integrate services and promote partnership working, is well placed to be an advocate for all children and young people. Leadership within the directorate is good, clearly focused on integrating services and has successfully attracted external funding for projects such as the Skills Centre, children's centres and the Orleans Gallery. Priority is rightly given to children and young people who are looked after by the council and other vulnerable groups, who clearly benefit from integrated services and flexible approaches.

The leadership's capacity to improve has been enhanced through more effective and flexible partnerships, better procurement arrangements and a stronger financial position. The council is cost effective in that it performs above average overall for a relatively modest spend. The recruitment and retention drive in January 2006 targeted social workers and occupational therapists with mixed results. Some social workers were recruited from abroad and the council introduced a retainer package which has been successful in preventing a further reduction to the workforce. There has been continued improvement this year in workforce remodelling with schools. This is reflected in the way schools are positively seeking ways to improve the work-life balance for staff and alternative models of staff roles and responsibilities.

The council has become more outward looking, learning from the experiences and good practice of other councils and agencies. Action has been taken promptly in response to reports from external consultants, successfully promoting further development, for

example in areas of equality and diversity. Cabinet members use a 'traffic light' system to effectively hold directors to account, and have regular meetings to evaluate directors' reports. This maintains a well placed focus on the main priorities and enhances the council's strategic capacity to drive improvements that will make a difference to children and young people. The Children and Young People's Partnership Board is now in a good position to deliver the Every Child Matters agenda.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early intervention to address mental health needs of young offenders • services delivered in the community • support to looked after children from a dedicated nurse • achievement in Healthy Schools. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued improvement in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. • continued development of strategies for obesity.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>multi-agency training</i> • <i>collaborative working to identify and track vulnerable groups</i> • <i>road safety strategy.</i> 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the stability of long-term foster placements</i> • <i>the availability of in-borough foster carers.</i>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>quality of provision for Early Years</i> • <i>standards attained at Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly for the most able</i> • <i>improving trends for attendance and exclusions</i> • <i>increasing range of vocational training</i> • <i>participation of vulnerable groups in leisure and community activities.</i> 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>rates of progress, particularly for secondary pupils, those who are looked after and some from black and minority ethnic heritage</i> • <i>exclusions and attendance in secondary schools.</i>

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preventative working with partners to meet individual needs • strategic use of resources • a top London Youth Offending Team • looked after child is a member of Youth Parliament. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further reduce re-offending and Final Warnings.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preventative working with partners to meet individual needs • vocational training opportunities • looked after children supported in employment in the council • transitions and mentoring with vulnerable groups. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop work related learning placements with local employers.
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic management and learning from reviews and commissioned work • additional funding for projects • flexible partnership arrangements • workforce reform in schools. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain capacity to drive continuous improvements • continued development of Children's Trusts • continue to develop good commissioning arrangements.

Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

- The continued integration of services and their impact on each Every Child Matters outcome, including commissioning arrangements, improvements in Child and Adult Mental Health Services and the development of Children's Trusts.
- The availability and stability of in-borough foster placements.
- The impact of the council's strategy to improve rates of progress, particularly for secondary pupils, those who are looked after and those from black and minority ethnic heritage.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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