

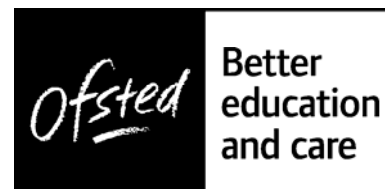
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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Mrs Jenny Lewis  
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**1 December 2005**

Dear Mrs Lewis

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF REDCAR AND CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 6 July 2005 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**

Overall outcomes in this area are good. Healthy lifestyles are promoted effectively and the council and its partners place a strong emphasis on healthy eating and sporting activity. The healthy schools programme is on track to meet targets and is well supported.

Improvement in teenage pregnancy rates compare favourably with other councils in the region but remain higher than the national average. Strategies are in place to address this issue and sexual health in general.

The number of social workers engaged with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) teams has improved and is complemented by good joint-working with health services and neighbouring councils. Improving locality based access arrangements to a range of CAMHS provision is a key priority area for the council. Collaborative working with health partners is a significant strength in delivering integrated services for children.

Levels of substance misuse are identified as a concern by the council and action to address this is given a high priority within the Community Safety Partnership and the

Young People's Strategic Partnership. The council area has been identified as a high focus area for substance misuse and the strategy for tackling young people's substance abuse with particular focus on vulnerable groups, including looked after children, is evolving well. There has been some progress in implementing this strategy although the council acknowledges that new initiatives in this area have yet to gain significant momentum.

The health of looked after children is well monitored and is strongly promoted and supported by a dedicated nurse working within the social work teams.

### **Staying safe**

Outcomes in this area are good and the council is working very constructively with its partners to ensure children continue to be well protected. Councillors are well-supported to fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities.

Referrals of children in need have reduced significantly this year as a consequence of improvements in the gate-keeping procedures and this has not compromised the responsiveness of the council to children's needs generally. The decreasing rate of re-referrals indicates a good response to, and management of referrals. The proportion of initial assessments completed within seven days has improved and is in line with comparators. The number of core assessments undertaken is much higher than comparators and the council is aware that such assessments are taking too long to complete. The reasons for this have been identified and changes have been made. The council can demonstrate these are beginning to improve the time taken to complete assessments.

Helping children and young people to feel safer, particularly in relation to bullying and domestic violence is a key priority area for the council. The council is safeguarding children well through effective management of child protection activity and sustaining very good levels of stability of placements of looked after children. Neglect has been identified as an increasingly significant factor in child protection registrations. This is contributing to children being on the register longer. There is particular concern about the proportion of registrations arising from domestic violence and this reflects the expressed concerns of children. The council is focusing attention on this issue together with its partners. The council has been proactive in developing new safeguarding arrangements and has a lead role in the child protection regional procedures development programme.

The falling number of looked after children is closely monitored to ensure robust decision-making processes. The balance of placements of looked after children continues to show an increase in the proportion of young children placed with families and a decrease in the overall number of children living in residential homes. There has been a significant increase in the number of young children placed for adoption but the

percentage of all looked after children who are adopted has reduced. There has been a substantial drop in the percentage of looked after children adopted within 12 months of the 'best interest decision' but the council is confident that this is a consequence of low numbers and particular circumstances which have been closely monitored.

A high proportion of children with disabilities over 14 years old have transition plans in place.

Good progress is being made in relation to the difficult issue of information sharing between agencies.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes in this area are generally good. The overall quality of early years provision is effective and making a significant contribution to this outcome area. The foundation stage profile, for 2004, shows that results exceeded the national performance for the percentage of pupils achieving the early learning goals in all areas. At Key Stage 1, results in 2004 at level 2 and above are in line with national averages for reading and mathematics, but for writing the results are above the national average. The rate of improvement is better than that for similar authorities and the national average in all three areas. At Key Stage 2, results in 2004 at level 4 and above are in line with national averages for English and science, but above for mathematics. Value added between Key Stage 1 and 2 is slightly above the mean. Overall the picture for primary education is strong.

At Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national averages in all core subjects and rates of improvement are also broadly similar to that of comparator authorities. There has been steady improvement in attainment at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and the results for 2004 for pupils achieving five or more A\* to C grades was the highest overall level of performance, exceeding the national rate of improvement and that of similar authorities. However, value added between Key Stages 2 and 3 is low and the performance of secondary schools is variable with a small number accounting for relatively low value added between Key Stages 3 and 4 despite GCSE attainment being in line with national averages. The council acknowledges this is a concern and strategies are in place in the education development plan to challenge and support these schools.

There are differences in the performance of boys and girls at each key stage although progress is being made to reduce the gap. The primary strategy has made a positive impact at Key Stage 2 and a range of effective initiatives are in place to improve boys' writing at Key Stages 2 and 3. There is also targeted support to improve boys' performance at the C/D grade borderline at GCSE.

The proportion of children looked after gaining one or more GCSE graded A\* to G or an equivalent general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) has improved slightly and is

better than comparators. The council has identified the need to improve the entry rate for recognised qualifications for pupils looked after. However, over the last four years the small cohort of pupils has also had a significant percentage of children with identified special educational needs.

Overall, Section 10 Ofsted inspection judgements show a higher proportion of provision in schools to be good or better for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities than for similar authorities or the national average. Similarly, careful monitoring and analysis by the council shows that pupils from a minority ethnic heritage performed better than those in similar authorities at Key Stage 2 and GCSE in 2004. The ethnic minority advisory group monitors performance effectively, enabling support and resources to be well targeted to bring about improvement.

Authorised absence rates in all phases are above the national average, although unauthorised absence rates have dropped significantly and are better than the national average in primary, and in-line in secondary. The council has a clear strategy to improve levels of attendance for all pupils, and specifically for looked after children, including those in out-of-borough placements, whose attendance is poor. Schools have individual targets to improve attendance and the new strategy focuses specifically on the small number of schools with lower levels of attendance. The council has taken appropriate action to reduce the number of schools with significant surplus places. An imaginative strategy to close and amalgamate schools is beginning to bring about significant reductions in places and schools are seeing the cost benefits of this reduction through the distribution of resources in fair funding formula.

Support for schools placed in formal categories of concern by Ofsted is very effective. No mainstream schools have been placed in special measures or identified as underachieving. The council has an effective system in place to monitor schools' progress, to challenge and focus interventions.

The council has maintained a well-resourced and effective youth and community service. This service makes a significant contribution to a pilot project to raise the self-esteem and self-awareness of looked after children. In addition, support is being targeted well in specific areas to address local concerns. The black and minority ethnic project challenged racist behaviour and reduced incidents in and around the South Bank area, similarly the service has worked effectively with young people to develop materials to combat anti-social behaviour. The involvement of young people in developing an inspection tool for inspecting young people's provision is particularly innovative and offers a good opportunity for young people to share in the inspection process to improve and change the services they use.

## **Making a positive contribution**

Overall outcomes in this area are good. The council has a range of innovative projects to engage with young people and there is strong evidence of young people's views having an impact and bringing about change. The council focuses on celebrating specific positive outcomes for young people. Children are enabled to make a positive contribution through a wide range of learning, recreational and cultural activities. The youth service plays a significant and effective role in co-ordinating and supporting many of these.

Children looked after are particularly well engaged and supported during and after leaving care. Young people are well engaged whilst receiving services, as is shown by the very high percentage of looked after children who have communicated their views to a review, and the quality of support from care leavers' personal advisors. Also young people who have used mental health services have contributed to the shaping of the CAMHS. The council is also responding well to concerns expressed by young people about bullying and is developing a universal anti-bullying policy for all settings.

The council has made considerable efforts in a number of areas, often successfully, to promote participation and involvement of young people. It recognises that the emphasis now needs to be on demonstrating the achievements of outcomes from such processes rather than the processes themselves.

Multi-agency working with children in need is a strength of the council and is evidenced by the work of the behaviour, attendance and truancy team, the behaviour education support team and the arrangements for 'schools without walls'. The pupil referral unit has been very well-supported and was quickly removed from the category of special measures.

The council acknowledges that in 2002-03 there had been problems with school exclusions and the re-integration of pupils. Since then positive and effective steps have been taken to provide an appropriate alternative curriculum programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to address disaffection and reduce the number of exclusions. The development of good preventive 'respite arrangements' for pupils at risk of exclusion is also a strong feature of the overall strategy to reduce exclusions. Additional capital investment by the council has secured the opening of a new school for children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties in September 2005. The prospects for further improvement are promising.

There has been a further slight rise in offending by looked after children and this continues to be an area for improvement for the council. The picture for recidivism rates shows an overall reduction in re-offending for the South Tees Youth Offending Team area although in this council's area there was a small rise in the number of young people offending.

The proportion of early years providers issued with actions at the point of registration is relatively higher for some types of provider, although in some cases there have been only a small number of registration visits. The council needs to satisfy itself as to whether this continues to be a cause for concern and what action it can take to improve the support for providers.

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

Outcomes in this area are good. The support given to looked after children to improve outcomes and the transition to adult life and economic independence is very good. All children and young people with special educational needs are supported by the connexions service to devise and keep under careful review, plans for transition at 16 and 19 years old. Action through the SureStart programme, Jobcentre Plus and training providers, is making a positive impact on the economic well-being of parents and carers of children and young people. Improvements include a significant increase in the achievement of national qualifications, success in gaining employment and reduced numbers of children in need.

Overall, the quality of education provided for 14 to 19 year olds is good. The proportion of young people progressing to higher education is improving although overall participation rates post-16 remain just below the national average. Improving the number not in education, employment or training remains a priority for the council. The number of young people involved in the increased flexibility programme has increased significantly, although outcomes are more variable. Work-based learning is now well established and outcomes at national vocational qualification (NVQ) level are in line with national averages. The council has initiated a number of successful strategies to improve 14 to 19 provision and to enhance the range of curriculum opportunities. There is good collaboration in the planning and delivery of post-16 education and training. The local learning partnership provides an effective forum for developing the range of provision, in partnership with sixth form and further education providers. The council works effectively with the local Learning and Skills Council, exemplified by the agreement to develop a new post-16 consortium involving three schools to serve the west of the borough.

The council has made some progress in improving the direct payments made to young people although more remains to be done. It can demonstrate that young people with disabilities who are in transition are being helped to make active choices regarding the services they use and to take direct responsibility for managing costs.

## SUMMARY

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaboration with key partners to improve the health of young people</li> <li>• Healthy Schools Award and the links being made between sport and healthy eating</li> <li>• the strategic focus on reducing teenage pregnancies and improving the sexual health of young people.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being Healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further reduce teenage conception rates</li> <li>• arrangements to tackle substance misuse</li> <li>• access to CAMHS service on a locality basis.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective management and timely reviews of child protection cases</li> <li>• stability for looked after children</li> <li>• good performance on fostering and adoption</li> <li>• transition plans for children with disabilities</li> <li>• discharge of the corporate parenting role.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• timeliness of core assessments.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overall levels of attainment, particularly in primary education and much improved GCSE performance</li> <li>• effective monitoring, challenge and support to schools</li> <li>• good targeting of activities and resources to need, for example SureStart, leading to improvement in outcomes</li> <li>• range of learning, recreational and cultural activities available to children and young people</li> <li>• effective contribution the youth service makes to this outcome area.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improved attendance in primary and secondary schools</li> <li>• keep under review the achievement and attendance of children looked after</li> <li>• the variability of performance at Key Stage 3 in a small number of schools.</li> </ul>

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the range of innovative projects to engage and listen to young people to bring about change</li> <li>• support to young care leavers</li> <li>• effective multi-agency work, for example the school without walls and behaviour support strategies</li> <li>• the role of the youth service in coordinated projects with education and social care.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective support to early years settings prior to registration</li> <li>• reduce further the number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions and improve reintegration rates.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coordination of 14 to 19 provision and the role of the local learning partnership</li> <li>• improving access to higher education</li> <li>• well targeted early years support and provision to areas of disadvantage is reducing the numbers of children in need</li> <li>• effective and ongoing support for care leavers.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participation rates post-16</li> <li>• the range and quality of the 14 to 19 curriculum</li> <li>• the take up of direct payments to young people.</li> </ul>

## **Service Management**

The council has a very good track record of close collaboration with relevant partners in analysing needs and setting aspirational and challenging targets for improvement. Achievements include significant improvements across a range of social care indicators and steady progress has been sustained with educational achievement.

This council has ambition, energy and enthusiasm in seeking to raise the aspirations of the community. Substantial progress has been made in delivering several ambitious plans and initiatives that have led to improvement for local people. The strategic plan for the council 2003–07 sets out seven strategic themes clearly linked to the community strategy. Objectives and priorities have been linked to resources and social care services have benefited from additional investment. The council has demonstrated its ability to re-prioritise activities and resource decisions in order to achieve key outcomes. The council’s self-assessment clearly maps priorities for children and young people to the strategic plans of partners and statutory plans against the five outcomes for children’s services. Although performance management has improved and is secure for education and social care services, further work is needed across all the council’s services to embed the use of performance indicators to drive overall service improvement. The council’s capacity is being enhanced by the strategic partner’s



contribution and significant improvement in the information and communication technology and information management systems although further consolidation is necessary.

Good progress has been made through the work of the change management team to prepare for children's services and in developing an interim children and young people's plan. Secure management arrangements for children's services are now in place and the transition for social care staff to the new service has been smooth.

The council is very effective in generating energetic and collaborative partnerships with health, neighbouring authorities and other significant agencies such as the local Learning and Skills Council. There are very sound examples of services collaborative work leading to improved outcomes, for example for looked after children and children and young people with disabilities.

The council has good capacity to improve further.

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

#### **Being healthy**

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

- the teenage pregnancy strategy and the impact of the locality strategies on conception rates
- action to reduce rates of sexually transmitted disease.

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

- outcomes in relation to increased levels of investment in CAMHS.

#### **Enjoying and achieving**

*Early years provision promotes children's development and well-being and helps them meet early learning goals:*

- action to secure the expansion of out of school provision and to discharge retained functions for potential childminder and crèche providers
- action to support early years settings pre and post registration.

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

- the range and quality of provision available to support children and young people educated other than at school.

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

- action is leading to improvement in the attendance and achievement of children who are looked after.

### **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:*

- action is leading to improved participation rates and an appropriate range of pathways for young people 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: Redcar and Cleveland Borough 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>3</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</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