

9 December 2010

Ms Barbara Shaw  
Acting Director of Children's Services  
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council  
Seafield House, Kirkleatham Street  
Redcar  
Cleveland TS10 1SP

Dear Ms Shaw

## Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

|   |                      |   |
|---|----------------------|---|
| 4 | Performs excellently | An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements |
| 3 | Performs well        | An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements               |
| 2 | Performs adequately  | An organisation that meets only minimum requirements            |
| 1 | Performs poorly      | An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements         |

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

## Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council children's services assessment 2010

|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Children's services assessment | Performs well (3) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|

Children's services in Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council perform well.

The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The very large majority of primary schools are at least good. Two of the three special schools are good. The third special school has weaknesses identified in an inspection in 2009 and is making satisfactory progress. The two children's homes are at least good as are the local fostering and adoption agencies. Much of the early years and childcare provision is good or better. Post-16 provision is also strong with the three colleges and one of the two school sixth forms judged to be good. The other sixth form is satisfactory. In contrast, the proportion of good or better secondary schools is too low. Inspections show that, although none are inadequate, over half are only satisfactory. The pupil referral unit, last inspected in 2007, was judged to be satisfactory at that time.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found much that was strong and no areas for priority action.

National performance measures show that almost all outcomes are in line with or above the averages for England or for similar areas. Results in national tests and examinations at the age of 11, 16 and 19 are at least in line with similar areas. However 16- and 19-year-olds from low-income families do less well than others of the same age and that difference is not reducing quickly enough. The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, work or training is above similar areas. The above average number of young people who say that they have been drunk or taken drugs recently is also a concern, as is the proportion of those who break the law more than once.

### Key areas for further development

- Reduce the difference in achievement between 16- and 19-year-olds from low-income families and others of the same age.
- Reduce the proportion of those who break the law more than once.
- Reduce the proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in education, work or training.

### Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are successful. Nearly all childminders and schools are good at promoting healthy lifestyles, as are the two children's homes and the pupil referral unit. The local area reports that services for children and young people with mental health difficulties are

getting better. Other improvements include the good number of children who have school lunches and the increasing number of young people who take part in sport regularly. Fewer young women under the age of 18 become pregnant. The 2009–2012 Children and Young People’s Plan acknowledges that some families in specific parts of the borough need more help. The local authority has also identified the need to continue its good work on reducing the number of overweight children and encouraging more mothers to breast-feed their babies.

Ofsted’s inspections confirm that child carers, schools, the pupil referral unit and the children’s homes ensure that children and young people are safe. The most recent inspection of front-line child protection services found that multi-agency working to protect children identified to be at risk of harm was strong. Assessment of children who have a disability is good. Children usually feel safe in the community. Schools are using a database to monitor bullying and anti-social incidents are reducing. One weaker aspect is the increasing number of children and young people who are admitted to hospital because they are injured either accidentally or deliberately. The 2009–2012 action plan explains clearly how this will be reduced, for example by training childcare providers, reducing accidents that occur on school journeys and providing timely support to children who live in families where domestic violence is a concern.

The large majority of child carers, nurseries and primary schools are good at helping children and young people do well and enjoy their learning. At the end of primary school, pupils do as well as in similar areas in their national tests. Provision in the special schools is also good. Ofsted’s monitoring visits show that the local authority provides good support to the inadequate special school. Some secondary schools are contributing very effectively to young people’s educational outcomes but six are only satisfactory. Slow progress for some groups of young people is often a common weakness in these schools. Overall, GCSE results match those in similar areas. However, 16-year-olds from low-income families and young people who have special educational needs need more help to do better. The local authority is successful in its work to help the weakest schools but more needs to be done to ensure that the six satisfactory secondary schools become at least good.

Arrangements for involving children and young people in a positive way and engaging them in reviewing local services are mostly successful. When inspected, schools and children’s homes are rated highly in this aspect and most young people contribute positively to their communities. Fewer young people break the law for the first time. Almost all young people who offend are in education, training or work and have a suitable place to live. However, the Youth Justice Board has judged that the youth offending service is performing poorly on rates of re-offending. Funding has been provided to tackle youth crime and ensure that fewer young people break the law more than once. For example, young people who offend are helped to analyse the consequences of their actions and there are projects to work with families where children are at risk of offending. More work is required to reduce the number of young people in Redcar and Cleveland who drink too much or take drugs.

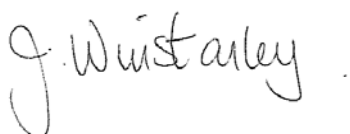
The local authority knows that too many young people aged 16 to 18 are not in work, education or training. The proportion is almost twice the national figure. The 2009–2012 action plan lists a range of key initiatives to tackle this weakness, including reducing unemployment, launching a new Redcar and Cleveland Apprenticeship Scheme and supporting young people with a disability so that they can access work or training. Local schools and colleges work well with the local authority to offer a good range of opportunities post-16. When inspected, one particular college was judged to be doing some outstanding work to involve young people in local community groups and with employers to extend opportunities for work or further learning. The number of young people who get good qualifications by the time they are 19 is rising and is above similar areas. However, an insufficient number of young people from low-income families progress to higher education. By comparison, special schools prepare young people with complex needs very well for life after school. An Ofsted survey focusing on this particular issue reported that one special school was outstanding in the way it developed young people's awareness of the future options available to them.

### **Prospects for improvement**

Most outcomes for children and young people are improving in Redcar and Cleveland. Areas where progress is still required are clearly identified in the local authority's 2009–2012 Children and Young People's Plan. The plan demonstrates robust analysis of performance data and accurate identification of issues for specific groups of young people, such as health inequalities across the borough and lower outcomes for young people from less advantaged communities. The inspection of Redcar Coast and Sure Start Children's Centre judged that the local authority has provided a very clear strategic lead for children's centres and engaged relevant agencies to very good effect in their development. Resources are allocated flexibly to improve standards further. For example, the inspection of front-line child protection services reports that the investment in a new electronic system has significantly improved the recording work of social care teams. Although performance is not consistently good because too many young people break the law more than once, HMI Probation judged that, by most measures, the youth offending service worked reasonably well and capacity to improve performance was good.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment