

9 December 2009

Ms Pat Reynolds
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Redbridge
Lynton House
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Dear Ms Reynolds

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating 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, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Redbridge perform adequately.

A recent unannounced inspection of contact, referrals and assessment arrangements for children in need identified important areas of action to improve some key front-line services. This judgement is pivotal in determining the children's services rating. Inspectors found that difficulties in recruitment and retention are reducing the speed at which necessary improvements are taking place. In addition, whilst partner agencies work well together there is a lack of clarity between agencies and the child protection assessment team about the criteria for referral and assessment. This has led to inappropriately high levels of referrals to children's social care and unnecessary stress for some families.

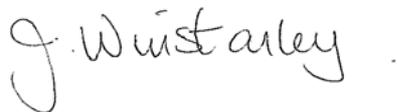
A higher than average proportion of primary, secondary, special schools and school sixth forms are good or outstanding than is found in similar areas or nationally. Post-16 provision is outstanding in just under a half of school sixth forms. It is adequate in the further education college. Child care provision is often good although the proportion of good childminders and nursery provision is lower than in similar areas and nationally. Childminders do not do as well as similar areas in making a good contribution to all five Every Child Matters outcomes areas.

Specialist provision and services for children and young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are variable in quality. Three special schools out of four in the borough are at least good; one is outstanding. The quality of pupil referral units is similar to that found nationally, although lower than in similar areas, and the children's home is good. The residential family centre is outstanding. The local authority's fostering agency is adequate, but its private fostering arrangements are inadequate. One serious case review has been undertaken between April 2007 and July 2009, which was conducted well.

Performance against a very large majority of indicators is in line with similar areas and national figures with strengths in areas of enjoying and achieving and achieving economic well-being. For example, test and examination results for pupils aged 11 and 16 and the achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications are all well above those found in similar areas and the national figure. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve well. Pupils at both ages 11 and 16 from lower income families achieve well in comparison to their peers in the borough and nationally. Their achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications is much higher than found in similar areas and slightly more young people progress to higher education when they are aged 19. Pupils with special educational needs following the national curriculum achieve better than the same group nationally and in similar areas at age 16. Fewer young people report being bullied and emergency hospital admissions due to injury are lower than national figures. However, there has been an increase in children with

child protection plans lasting two or more years, the rate of teenage pregnancies have increased recently and too few young offenders take part in education, employment or training, or have access to suitable accommodation compared to similar areas and nationally.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA