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Mr Adrian Loades
Interim Director of Children's Services
Peterborough City Council
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Dear Mr Loades

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in April 2011 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services 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 other published data.

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of inspection outcomes including the arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against similar authorities and/or 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 2010, 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.

Peterborough City Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs poorly (1)
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Children's services in Peterborough City Council perform poorly, as in 2010. Peterborough received a full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children in March 2010, which found inadequate safeguarding arrangements and good services for looked after children. In February 2011, an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found some areas of improvement from the full inspection, although 10 areas for development were also identified. In August 2011, a full re-inspection of safeguarding services identified continuing inadequate provision in parts of the service. Consequently, the children's services assessment for 2011 remains as performs poorly because of the serious nature of this finding.

The weaknesses in safeguarding are significant. However, the majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall and the large majority of provision helps children and young people to learn and stay safe. Overall, the quality of provision is improving with areas identified for improvement remaining largely the same as last year. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and more schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

Strengths

- More early years and childcare providers are at least good this year. The proportion of both good or better childminders and regulated childcare providers has increased. Four of the seven children's centres inspected for the first time are good or better.
- For children under five, the very large majority of provision in nursery and primary schools continues to be at least good, with some that is outstanding. Achievement remains below the national average but the proportion of five-year-olds reaching a good level of development has improved at a slightly faster rate than nationally over the last four years. The gap in achievement for those from low-income families and their peers is reducing and is smaller than that found elsewhere.
- The proportion of good or better primary schools is increasing. Four of the nine primary schools inspected during the year improved their performance from satisfactory to good. Ofsted's monitoring visits to two inadequate primary schools report good progress in addressing weaknesses with effective support from the local authority. Although educational attainment continues to be below average at the age of 11, a very large majority of children make the expected rate of progress in English between seven and 11 years of age.

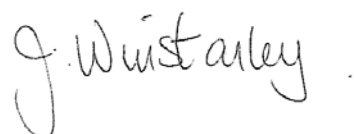
- More secondary schools than last year demonstrate good standards of behaviour and the level of poor attendance of some young people is reducing.
- Specialist provision overall has improved. One special school for students with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties has made steady progress and is no longer inadequate. The pupil referral unit is good. One of the two secondary special sixth forms is outstanding, but the other is now only satisfactory. An independent specialist college located in Peterborough, previously inadequate, is now good.
- For looked after children, two of the three local authority children's homes are outstanding and the other is good. Three of the six independently run homes in the area are good, however one has recently been judged inadequate.

Areas for further improvement

- There are continuing important weaknesses in services to safeguard children and young people. Although the recent full inspection of safeguarding reported areas of adequate, and in some instances better practice in relation to safeguarding, serious deficiencies remain in the social care fieldwork service.
- Although improving, education standards remain below national averages at all ages. This was an area for development last year and recently published results for 2011 indicate a slight improvement in the proportion of 11-year-olds attaining the expected level in both English and mathematics. Educational attainment for 16- and 19-year-olds from low-income families remains low and gaps with all young people in Peterborough are widening.
- Only two of the seven local authority secondary schools are good or better with the two inspected during the last year remaining only satisfactory. Two good and two outstanding secondary schools have become academies.

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 style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment