



Making Social Care  
Better for People



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**1 December 2005**

Dear Colleagues

## **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 4 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.

The self-assessment report was comprehensive and evaluative and was clearly based upon an inclusive approach with partner agencies and the community and voluntary sectors. At the meeting there was evidence of your commitment to this approach, which has informed your recognition of opportunities to take forward further work in some areas, such as engagement of young people. Throughout the self-assessment document and in the meeting a critical awareness of areas for improvement, progress and ambitions was apparent.

### **Being healthy**

Outcomes in this area are good. There is evidence of a comprehensive approach to this outcome with an effective programme of sport in schools and a range of health promotion activities. Evidence of the impact of Surestart programmes and work under the auspices of the Youth Service, Leisure and Cultural Services on the overall approaches to healthy lifestyles and health promotion was further demonstrated in the discussion. Examples of these included cooking with fathers and exercise and fitness activities with young families.

Performance against Teenage Pregnancy targets and effective working with the Drugs Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) is judged as good in terms of the rate of progress being made towards targets. Numbers of teenage pregnancies are falling consistently over time. The healthcare needs of looked after children are well met. The investment in and development of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is central to the aim of reducing out-of-county placements and reducing numbers in residential care overall. There is evidence that this strategy is proving to be effective.

The authority will seek to extend the contribution of CAMHS to this outcome through involvement in the promotion of positive mental health. This is seen as a means to successfully address issues of self-esteem relating to the experience of bullying and racism. This is part of your ongoing work programme as is the question of access to CAMHS by children and young people in the youth justice system.

The Children's Pathfinder Trust is proving to be an innovative means of service delivery with its focus on Children with additional needs. The authority is tackling the necessity to operate at a number of different levels with health partners and sources of specialist knowledge so as to take forward the aims of the Children's Trust whilst addressing universal health promotion. At the meeting it was indicated that the authority would utilise the Local Area Agreement (LAA) round to give impetus to the development of a comprehensive approach to health inequalities.

The engagement of children and young people is dealt with more fully in outcome four, but it was noted at the meeting, that engagement in this outcome area is promoted through the District and Youth Assemblies and school councils. There has been some work with Primary Care Trusts (PCT) to inform the setting of priorities.

The authority works in effective partnership with health agencies and a range of stakeholders in the voluntary and independent sectors. There is evidence of success in improving the satisfaction of those using targeted services, such as support to children with disabilities and their families through the Children's Pathfinder Trust.

## **Staying safe**

Outcomes in this area are good. The authority has in place an established and robust child protection system with strong internal and multi-agency audit and review supported by appropriate multi-agency training and significant elected member engagement. The authority has sustained its overall good performance and improved its performance on reviews of children on the child protection register since last year (97.8%).

The authority has a thorough approach to undertaking serious case reviews and demonstrates the capacity to learn from these by amending training programmes and revising procedures.

Inspections demonstrate that schools ensure and promote pupil safety in a satisfactory way. The authority's regulated services provide safe and secure environments for young people.

Children and their families receive responsive and effective access to assessment and, where appropriate, services within improving timescales thereby reducing the potential risks associated with delay. This is evident in the performance in delivering assessments within timescales which is good compared to their comparator group. It is also evident in the developing integration across services such as Surestart and Children's Fund which provided wider opportunities for alternative responses to initial contacts providing wider options than a single referral to Social Services.

Building on the solid foundations of the ACPC the Safeguarding Board became operational earlier than required, 15 June 2005, indicating a strong commitment from agencies to work together on the broader safeguarding agenda.

Numbers on the Child Protection Register have been high compared with local targets, but have started to reduce in the current performance year 2005/06. The reasons for the higher numbers have been thoroughly explored with no evident causal factor being found, other than that of large sibling groups. The authority recognises the importance of keeping these fluctuations under review as an indicator of varying practice or circumstance in a local area so as to maximise the use of resources to keep children safe.

The authority recognises a need to improve levels of awareness of child protection in the context of children with special needs and should consider establishing closer monitoring of the effectiveness of bullying policies. Surveys conducted by the Youth Service and evidence from Ofsted school inspectors identified occurrences of bullying and racism that are to be addressed as a priority.

The apparent over representation of minority ethnic children on the CPR should be kept under review so as to ensure proportionate and sensitive responses to referrals.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes in this area are generally good. The authority has made significant progress in most areas. The main exception is the Key Stage 4 results that continue to be an area of concern.

The authority has provided effective support to improve the quality of education in nursery and primary education. The overall quality of early years provision is good and supports children well in enabling them to meet the early learning goals. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 have been improving overall and were in line with statistical

neighbours in 2003/04. Standards in Key Stage 2 have been in line with statistical neighbours for the last three years. English has sustained year on year improvement over the past three years. The support provided by the education service in implementing the national literacy and numeracy strategies has been effective. Support has also been successful in improving standards at Key Stage 3 with the number of pupils attaining Level 5 being in line with national results in all three core subjects. However, they are still below those of statistical neighbours.

At Key Stage 4 outcomes for A\*-G are at the national average but the number of pupils achieving GCSE A\*-C continues to be below the national average. Within the overall results, there are particular groups who are under-performing, in particular boys in some geographical communities. The Council has targeted funds at school improvement in Key Stage 4 since 2003/04 and is looking to strengthen its strategy in working with under-performing groups or localities but there is insufficient evidence yet to evaluate the impact of these measures.

There is good support to help looked after children enjoy and achieve, including very high levels of access to computers, ongoing support to foster carers to encourage learning, dedicated education welfare officers, residential and youth service link workers. The proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSE is satisfactory and improving and the council has in place a number of imaginative schemes to support their learning.

Attendance has improved overall and is satisfactory in primary schools but the level of unauthorised absences is unsatisfactory in some secondary schools. The number of exclusions rose slightly in secondary schools in 2003/04 but generally the rate of exclusions is in line with national averages. Provision for those who have been excluded from school is good and the rate of re-integration is better than average. Looked after children generally attend well and have low rates of exclusion from school.

Support for schools is effective. The number of schools placed in formal categories of concern by Ofsted is below the national average and shows an improving trend. The Leadership Initiative Grant (LIG) has been well used to improve performance in targeted schools.

There is a good level of support for young people to engage with informal learning. The youth service provides a wide range of opportunities and there is a large Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Youth workers are linked with residential homes to promote the inclusion of looked after children into local sport and leisure provision. There is a high level of inclusion of children with special educational needs in formal and informal learning and their progress is well monitored.

## **Making a positive contribution**

Outcomes in this area are generally good. The council places a high priority on involving children and young people in the decision making process. Concerted efforts are made to involve young people, including those in vulnerable groups, in structures and projects that give them a say in service development. Some have been involved in the recruitment of staff and in producing resources targeted at young people. There is a dedicated youth engagement team and an extensive annual survey of the views of young people, with over 1300 responses in 2003/04. Survey results inform the development of subsequent planning and priorities. Youth assemblies are active in each of the seven districts and the early years team organises an annual children's conference. There are many examples of young people influencing services for children, for example in the healthy eating developments in schools. The authority is sophisticated in its analysis of participation by different groups of young people and has set targets for improvement of its overall range of engagement activities, for example to provide better advocacy for some disabled children, especially those not using speech. It has also recognised the need to bring its initiatives into one coherent strategy.

The majority of children and young people are given effective support in managing change in their lives. This includes specialist support where required, for example for black and minority ethnic carers. Transition for disabled children and those with special educational needs is effectively supported through a number of multi-agency arrangements. Young people's involvement in care planning is widespread and the number of looked after children participating in statutory reviews is satisfactory but should be improved further. The council has recognised where it needs to spread best practice in order to further develop the involvement of young people and parents in planning transition; one area for improvement is to ensure black and minority ethnic disabled young people have access to culturally appropriate services. The authority also plans to carry out more work with Years 6 and 7 pupils to maintain levels of participation as they move from primary to secondary school.

The number of first-time offenders in the youth justice system has been above average but is beginning to reduce and the rate of re-offending is below the national average. The proportion of final warning, reprimands and convictions of looked after children is below average. The authority has recognised the need to improve the integration of services to prevent youth offending. The management capacity of the youth offending service has been strengthened. The service is located within the culture and community department with work underway to locate it within the young people's division of this department, to help foster links with other services and improve participation in education and training. Youth Inclusion Support Programmes (YISPs) are being rolled out across the county.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

Outcomes in this area are good. The council has engaged well with partners, including the local Learning and Skills Council and Connexions, in the development of a 14-19 strategy to extend opportunities for young people, especially in vocational courses. Positive outcomes include an apprenticeship programme for 50 young people per year in one area and common timetabling arrangements together with integrated transport in another area. E-learning is being used to create links between pre and post 16 providers and these developments are linked into extended school activities.

Staying on rates are satisfactory and the number of young people not in education, training or employment is below average overall. The authority has a wide ranging and good quality entry to employment programme, which targets hard to help and vulnerable young people among its client groups. This includes a specialist pathway for disabled young people and there is a well developed programme for Year 11 pupils with special educational needs to facilitate transition to work. The authority has gained Beacon Status for its work in promoting skills development with some of the hardest to help young people. There is excellent support for care leavers and the percentage in employment, education or training has improved substantially. Imaginative schemes to encourage participation include incentive payments for attendance at college or training.

Achievement in sixth forms is satisfactory but below that of statistical neighbours. There are low retention levels in some areas of the county for young people in post-16 education and training. The authority knows of these issues and one of its key priorities is to improve attitudes to learning in targeted areas. This is underpinned by the progress being made in working with partners to develop the curriculum opportunities available post-16. The authority has worked closely with schools to rationalise provision and this has led to some schools deciding to close their sixth form provision. There is some evidence that this has addressed the impact of small sized sixth forms. Schools are working well together and with other providers to increase both the range of vocational courses and the extent of provision available below level three. In addition, the youth service is working with young people to help them gain accreditation, which enhances their employability skills. An example of this is the U project which produced education, employment and training plans for all but 5% of a specifically targeted group; the E2E programme delivered an outcome of 50% of participants moving into education, training and employment and was graded 1 in its inspection.

## SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wide range of activities and themes considered in context of highly effective partnership, impact of Surestart programme noted</li> <li>• the emphasis on equity of outcome and the impact of the Children's Trust on meeting the needs of those with additional needs in a flexible way.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of CAMHS to improve capacity to support specific groups, e.g. Young Offenders as well as to contribute to broader mental health promotion activities.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coherent and robust CP system in place with ongoing critical review and learning: Safeguarding Board now operational.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• addressing issues of bullying and racism more effectively.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• variety of approaches to support attainment and engagement of looked after children</li> <li>• raising standards in early years and primary education and Key Stage 3</li> <li>• effective provision for excluded pupils and effective re-integration.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evident disparities between communities in levels of attainment and engagement, including the levels of absence.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creative approaches to the engagement of children and young people</li> <li>• very good support to care leavers and those children and young people in the care system.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivery of coherent strategy for engagement</li> <li>• involvement in reviews by looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for vulnerable groups in transition</li> <li>• extensive ETE programme with good outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rates of staying on in some communities</li> </ul>

## **Service management**

The authority has demonstrated the capacity to develop, through complex partnership arrangements and a shared strategic vision of ambitions for children and young people.

Good examples of creative and innovative approaches exist with regard to defined groups although there is not yet a fully developed strategic approach to consultation and engagement with children/young people/parents in place. This is being actively addressed as a result of the Self Assessment preparation work, which had provided evidence of a broad range of existing activities. The involvement of Leisure and Cultural Services provides added impetus to strategies to reach out to some of the harder to engage communities, with examples of opportunities to harness multiple strands of work together to maximise the impact for improvement overall.

Clear priorities and strategies to deliver service ambitions flow from the authority's approach to corporate business planning and review. Plans coming to the end of their life in 2005 are being revised in the context of new political leadership of the Council and are on track to provide an up to date strategic framework of policy priorities. There is a coherent connection between corporate priorities and service planning and review.

There are two main issues the authority is addressing: achievement levels at Key Stage 4 and lower engagement levels on the part of some communities. The authority has a strong focus on these issues and a range of initiatives is in place to address them. The Self Assessment process has been effective in identifying further options for the deployment of resources. Different services working in similar areas are now being harnessed more strategically to generate potential solutions to issues of longstanding. The significant themes requiring focus running through the APA process are those of inclusivity and improved achievements. A focus on equity of outcomes rather than inputs is identified as a helpful means of addressing this area of challenge for the Council in partnerships across the County.

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

### **Being healthy**

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

- development and contribution of CAMHS to overall strategic goals of positive health promotion.

*Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people:*

- achievement of coherent approach to health inequalities.



## **Staying safe**

*Agencies collaborate to safeguard children according to the requirements of current government guidance:*

- the effectiveness of the Safeguarding Board.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

*Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and achieve highly:*

- improvement in achievement in challenging communities and specific groups.

## **Making a positive contribution**

*Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision-making and in supporting the community:*

- effectiveness of the strategy for overall engagement of children and young people.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

*Action is taken to ensure that education and training for 14-19 years olds is planned and delivered in a co-ordinated way and also education and training for 16-19 year olds is of good quality:*

- staying on rates across communities and the quality and availability of 6th form and other post 16 opportunities.

## 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

cc: Roger Latham, Chief Executive

## APA final judgements 2005: Nottinghamshire County 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>4</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