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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Ms Hyde

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

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

Outcomes in this area are excellent; "Healthier Living" is one of the council's eight local strategic priorities. Key agencies work together well to promote healthy lifestyles. The teenage pregnancy board has invested heavily in sex and relationship education through schools and the youth service and a multi-agency partnership delivers advice on sexual health to children in Years 9 and 10. Levels of under-16 conception have reduced by 26% since 1998.

North Lincolnshire was the first authority to have all schools working towards level 3 of the Healthier Schools programme and all schools inspected by Ofsted met the requirements of the National Curriculum in this area.

A significant number of schools have introduced healthy eating programmes. Healthy Cafés in many early years' settings develop approaches to healthy eating. In one nursery parents and children are involved in setting menus as part of the curriculum.

Children and young people have good opportunities to participate in sporting activities. A good proportion of schools have achieved the Sportsmark awards. 'Fit for Football' delivered in partnership with North Lincolnshire Council and Scunthorpe Football Club through the 'Its Football in the Community' programme is an out of school hours project which successfully works with children aged 9 to 11 to promote the benefits of

being healthy and physically active. The authority has recognised that it needs to provide a smoking cessation service.

The health needs of looked after children are met effectively, and performance has increased to very good, with planned further improvement. Strategies for health promotion, substance misuse, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) appropriately include looked after children as priorities, the youth service's contribution is also well described and involved to support young people. The effectiveness of the actions taken to promote the mental health of children through multi-agency targeted arrangements promise good outcomes. The council have yet to develop joint approaches to smoking cessation services.

Staying safe

Outcomes are good overall although some areas of social care performance identified in later paragraphs concerning the application of thresholds and child protection planning show a decline in performance. The council is working to ensure children and young people are provided with the safe environment to which they are entitled. The council's policies show good recognition of what constitutes a safe environment and their implementation is monitored consistently and rigorously, particularly in relation to looked after children. The council have recently reviewed and ensured the application of lessons learnt from serious case reviews conducted since local government review for referrals.

There has been an increase in the numbers of looked after children. Only 96% of these children have a named qualified social worker, a matter which the council are addressing. There has been a reduction in the numbers of children whose names are included on the child protection register following three consecutive annual increases. The council considers this has resulted from better multi-agency working on the ground. The council's performance on looked after children adopted has improved and is now good.

Children in need referral levels are below national and comparator figures. The referral management system has resulted in 100% children in need initial assessments, a more appropriate level of initial child protection conference registrations accompanied by a proportionate reduction of registered numbers that acceptably remain slightly above the comparator average.

Maximum performance was achieved in conducting child protection reviews, and de-registration levels are above the comparator average. The council adopted a safe approach in the consistent re-registration of formerly registered looked after children returning home. However performance on re-registration fell from maximum to acceptable leading to questions the council should address about the safety of decision-making and the effectiveness of multi-agency child protection planning.

The council's annual performance assessment (APA) document described a system for ongoing review of thresholds in the multi-agency child protection system, that was further discussed at the APA meeting. The council has conducted an annual audit of re-registrations, has now introduced more rigour into the child protection process, and for 2005/06 can demonstrate the child protection register (CPR) registration rate has reduced to a level which is closer to the national rate. The audit of re-registration has provided the council with assurance about the safety of decision-making in child protection reflected in a steady decline in the number of re-registrations. The council believes the percentage of re-registrations for 2004/05 shows an increase of re-registrations because the CPR denominator has significantly reduced, but this is the case for all councils with social service responsibilities.

Core assessments completed are below the national average by 20.2 per 10,000 and 10.2 below comparator average, and this raises questions about the application of thresholds of response to referrals and the council's capacity to respond. Performance on completion of core assessments reduced by 8.2% though remaining above the national average. The slight increase in repeat referrals further questions the application of thresholds.

Inspection of schools and early years settings by Ofsted found that arrangements to protect the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils were satisfactory, and all comply with child protection procedures. National missing children database checks are made on school transfer. A recent council review of serious case reviews undertaken since 1996 shows the council wants to ensure any lessons from the reviews are applied to policy and practice.

The council has sustained maximum performance in the stability of looked after children placements in foster care in the first year, but for those looked after for 4+ years and in the same foster placement for two years the picture remains less than satisfactory. Slightly fewer children were fostered by relatives or friends, and performance for young children fostered or placed for adoption has reduced but remains above acceptable. The percentage of looked after children placed for adoption has increased slightly and best interest placement performance has improved to good. Performance for looked after children placed with foster carers or for adoption remains satisfactory.

Children in need minority ethnic performance for referrals and active cases remains less than satisfactory, and it is unclear how the race equality scheme review will affect policies and procedures.

Over 90% of disabled children have a transition plan likely to lead to positive outcomes for the children concerned. The council needs to ensure all such children have effective plans.

Evidence from regulatory inspections for the council's five children's homes indicated that standards were met in nearly every case, with minor improvements required in some areas. The council's work in the specific areas of the health of looked after children was commended. This was echoed in the findings of the fostering inspection. It was noted that there was effective management of the service and that children reported feeling "well cared for and involved".

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are good. The overall quality of early years provision is satisfactory and the proportion of children achieving early learning goals is around the national average. Overall, results at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 have improved at a similar rate to that seen nationally and standards are in line with statistical neighbours and national averages.

Standards at Key Stage 4 have improved significantly, as a result of 14 to 19 Pathfinder funding and the introduction of the excellence challenge cluster, to just below the national average. The use of data systems to track the performance of individual pupils against their previous attainment has improved and is excellent. The secondary strategy produced in partnership with school heads and college principals has extended the range of vocational provision available to pupils aged 14 to 16. The proportion of looked after children gaining one or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) is good, however the proportion achieving five A* to C grades is low.

Strategies to improve standards of behaviour and levels of attendance have been effective. Attendance in primary schools is good and the rate in secondary schools is around the national average. Effective strategies to reduce previously high levels of exclusions from schools has included a review of the curriculum to provide alternative pathways for pupils not able to cope with a traditional curriculum, in addition to a commitment from headteachers to support all looked after children in mainstream schools. In 2003/04 there were no exclusions in the authority and arrangements to provide an appropriate curriculum for those at risk of exclusion are well-planned.

Support for school improvement is effective. There were no secondary schools placed in formal categories as a result of Ofsted inspection and only one primary school found to have serious weaknesses. None of the secondary schools inspected by Ofsted in 2003/04 had any unsatisfactory aspects of provision. However the proportions of very good aspects were significantly lower than that found in secondary schools nationally.

Significant improvement in school attendance and standards of behaviour of looked after children result from the application of well-developed strategies. Recent education service restructure has been designed to better meet the needs of looked after children.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good, and strategic approaches include many positive features: the Youth Offending Team (YOT) works effectively as part of a multi-agency partnership with council services such those delivered through children's centres, with the youth service, the Primary Care Trust and with Aimhigher on a range of strategies aimed at preventing youth offending, including reducing the level of youth crime. For example, the Positive Activities for Young People programme provided activities during school holidays for 90 children. This contributed to a reduction in offending rates of 12% in summer 2004 when compared to the previous year.

The council's approaches to gathering the views of children and young people are also strong. The youth service coordinates and facilitates a well-established youth forum. The service also provides training for young people from across the authority to prepare them for making a contribution to planning and reviewing council services provided for children and young people.

Looked after children over four years of age contributed their views to statutory reviews and they are involved in social care staff recruitment, focus groups, wider council services consultations and the great youth debate. Although levels of first time offenders and recidivism are declining, performance for looked after children receiving final warnings, reprimands and convictions remains at a low level. The council has identified significant issues in this area that form the basis of planned action to improve this continued unsatisfactory performance.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are good. The inspection of 14 to 19 education and training carried out by Ofsted in November 2004 found that collaboration between the local authority, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), headteachers and college principals was strong and effective, resulting in significant improvements in the provision available for young people. The local authority, with support from the LSC, has provided strong leadership to ensure that key partners work together to meet the needs of all young people and strategies for 14 to 19 education and training have been effective in extending the range of vocational options available. Pupils aged 14 to 16 are able to follow vocational courses offered by colleges as a result of common timetabling and shared transport arrangements. Achievements at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and on advanced certificate of vocational education (AVCE) are slightly below the national averages. However, pass rates for advanced subsidiary level (AS), GCE A level and AVCE courses, and value added and achievement are consistently high at the sixth form college. Participation rates of young people aged 16, 17 and 18 are improving but are below the national average.

There is strong support for young people with specific learning difficulties and disadvantages in most schools and colleges across the area. The Connexions Service helps to ensure that young people have good access to impartial advice and guidance to ease transition through the various stages of their education and training. Participation rates of young people aged 16, 17 and 18 in both areas are low but show signs of improvement.

The council has sustained its very good performance for care leavers in employment, education and training at age 19.

Direct payments for children with disabilities are below the planned target and are unsatisfactory, but further investment will be made in National Children's Homes Kaleidoscope to deliver a wider range of support services which are expected to improve take-up by these children and their families. However performance for children in need with disabilities shows maximum performance.

SUMMARY

| Strengths | Areas for improvement |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage pregnancy reductions • sexual health advice • health care of looked after children • support for appropriately targeted CAMHS services • participation in sport in schools. | <p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provision of smoking cessation services. |
| <p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looked after children – adopted from care & with three or more foster care placements in the first year • child protection register – reviews • diversity and anti-racism policies and action plans in place • transition plans for most disabled children. | <p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proportion of looked after children with a named qualified social worker • children looked after for 4+ years – in same foster placement 2+ years - placement disruptions • children in need – re-referrals • levels of child protection register re-registrations. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements in the behaviour and attendance of looked after children • effective strategies to improve standards at Key Stage 4 • extended range of vocational provision at Key Stage 4 supported by 14 to 19 Pathfinder • excellent use of individual pupil data to monitor progress and raise standards. | <p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looked after children – care leavers educational attainment • standards at Key Stage 4. |
| <p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looked after children who communicated their views to a review • effective multi-agency approach to reduce first time offender numbers. | <p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children. |
| <p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looked after children — care leavers in employment, education training at age 19 • strong guidance and support for young people with specific difficulties or disadvantages • strong and effective partnership-working between schools, colleges and work-based learning providers to extend the range of vocational options available for young people. | <p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low levels of post 16 participation • numbers of children with disabilities receiving direct payments. |

Service management

Performance is good in the context of financial pressures. Sound financial management and targeted resource allocation are evident features. Support from elected members and senior officers in taking forward the children’s services agenda is strong. There is a significant change programme in place through the Pathfinder Children’s Trust. A lead member for children’s services and education has been appointed and the appointment of a Director of Children’s Services is on hold pending the appointment of a new chief executive. Some progress has been made in the integration of education and social care functions, but further significant progress may be affected by delays in senior management appointments.

The authority’s ambitions and priorities for education are clear and most outcomes for children and young people are improving. Education plans are well focussed on raising standards. For example, the secondary strategy supported by 14 to 19 Pathfinder

funding is beginning to have impact on standards at GCSE and collaborative work with external partners has extended the curriculum at Key Stage 4, to provide a good range of vocational options delivered in partnership with colleges and training providers.

Support for school improvement from the learning services team is effective. The local authority focuses its challenge at individual pupil level with very good use of management information to support self-evaluation and target setting. Arrangements for performance management are well developed.

The council continue to give priority to support financially the social care services arranged for children in need. Placement costs for looked after children have risen. There is a strategy to ensure all looked after children have a named qualified social worker. There is evidence of an established partnership approach to delivering the change for children agenda supported by effective consultation with key stakeholders. In social care staff training remains a council priority, the council's Workforce Strategy is being applied to address staff recruitment/retention issues and strong systems and structures for performance management are established.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

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

- the implementation of a smoking cessation programme.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- CIN re-referrals and CP re-registrations.

Enjoying and achieving

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- the effectiveness of strategies to continue to improve standards in all key stages.

Making a positive contribution

Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to make a positive contribution:

- conviction rates of looked after children and the effectiveness of targeted work to address levels of offending.

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:

- progress in the implementation of the 14-19 area inspection action plan.

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: North Lincolnshire Council

| Areas for judgement | Final judgements ¹ |
|---|-------------------------------|
| The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people | 3 |
| The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people. | 3 |
| The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people. | 3 |
| The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people | 3 |

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 |