

9 December 2010

Mr Tolis Vouyioukas  
Interim Executive Director for Children and Young People's Services  
London Borough of Newham  
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Dear Mr Vouyioukas

## 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

## The London Borough of Newham children's services assessment 2010

<b>Children's services assessment</b>	<b>Performs well (3)</b>
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Children's services in the London Borough of Newham continue to perform well.

The large majority of types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. Almost all secondary schools in the borough are good and a high number are outstanding. Colleges and sixth forms in schools are all good, as are special schools and pupil referral units. A large majority of primary schools are good or better. In the last year, two primary schools have been judged to be inadequate whereas in the previous year none were in this category. An exceptionally small number of childminders in the borough are good, the proportion being the lowest in England. The number of good childminders has reduced still further in the last year and the number who are inadequate has more than doubled. The local fostering agency is good. The local adoption agency is satisfactory, as is the residential family centre. The local authority's children's home is satisfactory.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found much that was strong and no issues that seem to be putting children and young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable at risk of harm. The three serious case reviews were undertaken in the last year and all have been conducted well.

National performance measures show a large majority of outcomes are in line with or above the averages for England or for similar areas, although outcomes for health are not as strong as other areas. Too many five- and 11-year-olds are obese. The educational achievement of very young children continues to be well below average and, for the second year running, Newham was one of the 10 lowest performing local authorities in England in this respect. Educational outcomes for the youngest children have improved in the last two years and those who were not doing as well when first assessed are catching up with their peers by five years of age. Examination results for 16-year-olds and some 19-year-olds fell below similar areas in 2009 because they have been improving at a slower rate.

### Key areas for further development

- Improve childminders so more are good or better.
- Improve the educational achievement of five-year-olds so it is at least as good as in similar areas.
- Ensure examination results for 16- and 19-year-olds consistently improve at a faster rate than in similar areas.

## Outcomes for children and young people

A large majority of local services and settings are successful in encouraging children and young people to live healthy lives. Nearly all schools and the children's home are good at this, but the number of childminders who are good remains exceptionally low. The local authority knows it faces significant challenges in improving the health of children, particularly the very young. Infant mortality rates are relatively high and local knowledge of how many mothers are still breast-feeding their babies when they are six to eight weeks old is much lower than in similar areas. Obesity among five- and 11-year-olds remains too high. However, more young children are being immunised and fewer 11-year-olds were obese in 2009 than in previous years. Services for children and young people with emotional or mental health difficulties are well developed. More children and young people are being referred to these services. Preventative care for children in the care of the local authority has improved as there has been a large increase in the number receiving annual health and dental checks.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are almost always good, except among childminders and childcare providers. An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services in March 2010 found the local authority has improved the level and consistency of the services it provides. Managers are good at monitoring local needs and deploying staff to cope with changing demands for services, which are high. Good partnership work is taking place between social workers and health visitors. However, further work is needed to ensure managers record their reasons for closing cases referred to social services by the police. The stability of both short- and long-term placements for children in care is now much lower than average. There are some weaknesses in the arrangements for ensuring that children are kept safe in the community. For example, increasing numbers of children are killed or seriously injured on the roads. The local authority is aware that too many children and young people still feel unsafe around the borough. Consequently, it is continuing to focus on tackling gangs and violent crime.

Nurseries, most schools and other services and institutions are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. However, too little childcare provision is as good as it could be. The achievement of very young children continues to be very low; although it improved in 2009 it remains lower than in similar areas. By the end of their primary education, pupils' test results are close to those in similar areas and most are making the progress that is expected of them. For the first time in 2009, examination results for 16-year-olds were lower than in similar areas. This is because the rate of improvement in Newham has slowed in recent years to be lower than average. Behaviour is almost always good in secondary schools. Very few secondary school aged pupils are regularly absent from school, which compares well to the rest of England. Children and young people with special educational needs and those from lower-income families do well in both primary and secondary schools, so the difference in their achievement and that of their peers is smaller than average. Pupils of White British or Black Caribbean heritage do not achieve as well as others when they are aged 11 and 16.

Most schools and other settings are good at involving children and young people in decision making and their community. Relatively high numbers of young women under the age of 18 become pregnant. Local services are working together well in this area so the number continues to fall at a faster than average rate. However, not as many young people are being screened for chlamydia and other sexually transmitted diseases as in similar areas. Re-offending by young people in Newham has reduced, but remains higher than in similar areas. Local services are beginning to be successful in reducing the number of young people offending for the first time. Young offenders' access to suitable accommodation is improving, but is not as good as in similar areas.

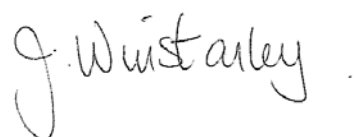
Colleges, schools and other providers are working closely together to provide all 14- to 19-year-olds with suitable education and training opportunities. Newham is one of the five Olympic boroughs and links with employers and local regeneration programmes have been strengthened to increase the number of apprenticeships available to young people. More school leavers are continuing with their education when they are aged 16. For the first time in 2009 the number of 19-year-olds who obtained the equivalent of two or more A level passes was lower than in similar areas. However, more 19-year-olds are obtaining the equivalent of five or more higher grade GCSE passes and the rate of improvement has matched that in similar areas and has been faster than in the rest of England. Young people from lower-income families achieve very well.

### **Prospects for improvement**

Many outcomes for children and young people in Newham are improving. A review of its Children and Young People's Plan by the local authority and its partners demonstrates good progress in reducing the level of teenage pregnancies and improving the achievement of children and young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, such as those in the care of the local authority. The local authority has been less successful in improving the quality of childminders in the borough and in securing a good rate of improvement in examination results for 16-year-olds and some 19-year-olds. The recent inspection of front-line child protection services found good leadership and management and effective use of performance information to ensure services met changing demands. However, Ofsted monitoring visits to weaker schools show a mixed picture. For example, a secondary school has been helped to improve quickly, but improvement in a primary school has been much slower.

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