

9 December 2009

Ms Helen Denton
Executive Director for Children and Young People
Lancashire County Council
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County Hall
Preston
Lancashire
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Dear Ms Denton

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

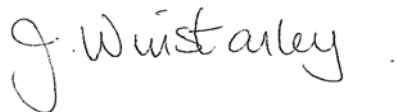
Children's services rating	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Lancashire County Council perform adequately.

The overall effectiveness of just over half of all regulated and inspected services and settings is good or better. This reflects variable performance across the range of provision. Nursery and primary schools perform above those in similar areas and found nationally, as do school sixth forms and the pupil referral units. Secondary schools, however, perform less well when compared to all other areas with just over half judged to be good or better. The sixth form college performs well and four of the eight general further education colleges were rated outstanding in their latest inspection. The joint area review in September 2008 judged services for looked after children to be inadequate, and three out of four serious case reviews conducted between April 2007 and July 2009 have been evaluated as inadequate. Settings and services which support those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable demonstrate more variable performance. There are 25 children's homes, the majority of which are good or better and nine are satisfactory. Four are inadequate and this is unsatisfactory. The local authority fostering service and the adoption agency are good and private fostering arrangements are adequate. Judgements for all Every Child Matters outcomes are good or better in a large majority of inspected services and settings but with poorer performance identified in private fostering arrangements and children's homes overall.

The council performs well against many indicators for Every Child Matters, with the large majority in line with similar areas and national averages. It does well in some areas of staying safe and enjoying and achieving, including outstanding practice in reviewing child protection cases within required timescales, good outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and school achievement at Key Stages 2 and 4 for the majority of pupils. Gaps in achievement between those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their peers are generally consistent with similar area and national averages. The numbers of 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training are reducing and fewer care leavers are able to find suitable work or training than 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 black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA