

26 November 2007

Ms Phyllis Dunipace
Executive Director, Children and Young People's Service
London Borough of Lambeth
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London SW9 7QE

Dear Ms Dunipace

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF LAMBETH

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

The London Borough of Lambeth consistently delivers above minimum requirements. The council's contribution to improving outcomes is good in service functions across four of the five outcome areas, enjoy and achieve, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being, and adequate in one area, being healthy.

The council has responded positively to issues raised by the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) and has made good progress in many of the areas for development. Despite the challenges of high pupil mobility, the council is working successfully with schools to ensure that good progress is made by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, from a low starting point, and actively involves children across the borough in service planning. Strong partnerships exist between the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and schools to help improve young people's health. Of particular note, is the council's innovative and preventative strategy to address issues of community safety and youth crime through partnerships between the police and the YOS. The council's wider reaching targeted actions to reduce levels of teenage conceptions are gradually taking effect in reversing previous rising trends and significant progress has been made in the last three years in reducing overall numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. However, both areas need to improve further.

Being healthy

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Agencies are working together to promote children and young people's health and good progress has been made against some key health outcome indicators that are now above the national average, including women who smoke during pregnancy, the percentage of mothers who breast-feed their babies and good dental health for children at five years of age. However, Lambeth has the highest rate of teenage conception in the country and high levels of sexually transmitted infection (STI), although levels of STI have declined at a faster rate than nationally.

Rates of death for children under 15 years old, although increased, are within national averages. Immunisation rates for young children are lower than the national average. Recent data suggest that this situation has improved. The children's centre strategy works well in involving significant numbers of general practitioners with child health surveillance services to encourage parents to immunise their young children.

Of the 71 schools participating in the authority, over half have successfully achieved the national Healthy Schools Status, ahead of the interim target. All schools inspected were judged good or better for attention to pupils' health needs. In contrast, health actions imposed on providers at registration and from inspections of early years services were much lower than the national average and for similar authorities, though the authority is working well with providers to address these issues and there is an improving picture.

The council has made good progress in meeting its targets on drug and alcohol misuse. Through field workers, the YOS has made good progress in arranging access for young people to substance misuse treatment programmes and numbers of young people in treatment referred through the Drug Action Team have improved.

Progress towards establishing a comprehensive CAMHS strategy is good. Third tier services are fully operational as CAMHS provide full cover to meet urgent needs and specialist mental health assessments. Fourth tier protocols and arrangements for children and young people with complex mental health needs, although in place, are not always fully accessible. However, the authority makes good use of private sector placements commissioned through the Primary Care Trust (PCT), wherever necessary. Waiting times for CAMHS are good on the 26 week wait indicators and the four to 13 week indicators. However, the less than four week wait indicators are worsening.

A dedicated CAMHS team linked to the YOS has increased numbers of young offenders' referrals to health assessments, in line with Youth Justice Board national averages. The assessment of health for looked after children is supported by a named doctor and nurse, and is excellent.

Rates of teenage pregnancy remain very high, well above those in similar areas and nearly twice the national average. Although the conception rate amongst 15-17 year olds has reduced by 6.6% since 1998, this is one of the lowest reductions in inner London. The authority has had some success with implementing the national strategies in reducing teenage conceptions, but in view of the challenging local context has refocused its strategies in the last year. Using more precise data on the profile of teenage pregnancies within the borough's wards, the council has targeted preventative activities at parents and young people in wider and more innovative ways. These include media advertising and greater access for young people to contraceptives, an expansion in specialist sexual health services, as well as sex and relationship education best practice programmes in schools. These activities are now having a gradual impact on reductions in levels of sexually transmitted infection and teenage conceptions. However, given the current trajectory of progress, the council is unlikely to meet the government's 2010 national teenage pregnancy target.

Areas for development

- Continue to reduce the rate of teenage conceptions and STI.
- Continue to improve access to CAMHS.

Staying safe

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

The revised Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) emphasises the local priority to issues of community safety. The Safer Schools Partnership has been extended and is contributing to reducing the incidence of crime and victimisation in schools and the wider community. Successful action has been taken to reduce the numbers of children killed or seriously injured on the roads.

All schools inspected were judged as satisfactory or better for learners adopting safe practices and for appropriate safeguarding procedures. Owing to the implementation of a robust action plan there have been some gradual improvements in relation to aspects of safety, child protection and suitably qualified staff in early years provision, although numbers of actions raised at registration and during inspection of early years provision, is still high.

Repeat referrals of children in need have reduced. High rates of mobility and population increases in the borough have contributed to the high levels of referrals overall. There is good and improving performance with the levels of initial and core assessments and the timeliness of their completion.

The council has had significant problems in recruitment and retention of permanent social workers. There is now a clear indication that its recent recruitment and induction strategies should improve this position in the coming year and create

greater stability in staffing at all levels. Despite the heavy reliance on long-term agency staffing in social care services, the council ensures consistent application of thresholds and the quality of assessments through regular audits.

All children on the Child Protection Register are allocated to a social worker, with 100% of their reviews completed on time. Initial child protection conferences have increased and levels of registration are high. Duration of children on the Child Protection Register has reduced, and is acceptable, and levels of re-registration are now very good.

The authority is aware of the disproportionate levels of registration of children from Black minority ethnic communities. However, its own analysis of this trend reveals no underlying practice concerns. The Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has secure arrangements in place for monitoring practice. There has been extensive training for those involved on the Common Assessment Framework, the role of the lead professional and on the revised eligibility criteria.

All looked after children are allocated to a qualified social worker, and the timeliness and numbers of reviews completed are good. Although reducing, the number of looked after children remain significantly above those of similar authorities. The council accommodates high numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeker children and a relatively high percentage is in foster placements and residential care. Although there is continued heavy reliance on independent fostering agencies, the majority of looked after children are placed within a 20 mile radius of the authority and outcomes from the authority's recent fostering inspection attest to safe care for these children.

Despite relatively high investment by the authority in this area, the percentage of looked after children adopted has fallen and is the lowest amongst similar authorities and, where adoptions occur, they are not completed in a timely manner. The authority continues to experience difficulties with adoption of children with disabilities, those from specific minority ethnic groups and older teenagers, but has been successful with Residence Orders in finding permanent families for the children. Short-term placement stability is very good, although long-term placement stability has declined slightly in the last year to just below the national average. However, the implementation of the long-term placement action plan is beginning to show improvements.

All young people leaving care have a personal adviser and the majority a pathway plan. Transitions plans for disabled children have improved considerably and a transitions panel led by adult services makes appropriate arrangements for the health and future care of disabled young people.

Areas for development

- Continue to increase the number of looked after children adopted and improve the timeliness of adoptions.

- Reduce reliance on agency fostering for looked after children and the use of residential care.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council has worked successfully within the constraints of high pupil mobility and high levels of children with literacy and language needs and over the last two years, has continued to drive up standards and pupils' rate of progress, especially in secondary schools. The authority has a good track record, above national average, of no schools in categories of concern for the last five years. Sound prioritisation and allocation of resources have contributed to school improvement teams working successfully with schools in this respect. Three quarters of primary schools inspected have been judged as good or outstanding.

The Tellus2 survey confirmed the inspection judgement that pupils 'enjoy attending school'. The quality of nursery and child care provision has improved significantly in the last year and a higher proportion is judged good or better. However, the proportion of provision judged as inadequate is above the national average.

Children's progress and standards have improved rapidly at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and are above statistical neighbours and in line with national averages. Pupils enter from a low base but as learning is consolidated, the majority of pupils make better than expected progress by age 16. In 2006, 57% of pupils gained five or more A*- C GCSE grades, which was in line with the national average and surpassed the local authority target of 53.2%.

The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*- C, including English and mathematics, has improved rapidly. The authority has made significant and rapid progress, above the national average, in improving attainment at Key Stage 4. Rigorous challenge and a high level of intensive support have led to a steady improvement in the Key Stage 2 results in English, where sustained improvement over the last five years has led to performance being above that of similar authorities. Overall, progress has been much slower in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2. In 2006, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 had not improved from the previous year and were below those of statistical neighbours.

The authority has worked successfully with schools to increase attainment by Caribbean and Black African pupils, the largest minority ethnic groups, and these pupils have made good progress. However, the attainment of Portuguese pupils declined and was well below the authority's average in Key Stage 4 in 2006, although attainment has improved in Key Stages 2 and 3. Appropriate actions have been taken to address issues of mobility and bilingualism with this group. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Looked after children make good progress by the end of Key Stage 4 and the number of young people

leaving care at age 16 who achieve five or more A*- C GCSEs has improved in 2007 to just below national average. Between 2005 and 2007, the numbers of young people leaving care with one GCSE A*- G have been well below the national average and similar authorities.

Children generally get a good start to their education, but a substantial proportion of children are still not acquiring the basic skills expected for four and five year olds, before they transfer to Key Stage 1. Whilst Foundation Stage teachers have been provided with professional development and assistance with assessing work, the authority recognises more needs to be done.

Permanent pupil exclusions in secondary schools are increasing and are higher than the national average. The support of children and young people who do not attend school has not improved significantly over the last two academic years, as only 55% of permanently excluded children are in alternative education with 20 hours plus per week.

The level of attendance in both primary and secondary schools is broadly in line with the national average and similar authorities. Rapid demographic changes in the borough present significant challenges for all schools in terms of high pupil mobility, especially in early years and primary schools, where this is as much as 10% annually and in some schools is as high as 25%. The authority is continuing to work with local communities and church leaders to address high levels of unauthorised absence in primary schools with encouraging signs of improvement.

Areas for development

- Increase the proportion of children reaching the level expected in the Foundation Stage particularly in communication, language and literacy.
- Reduce permanent exclusions in secondary schools and ensure appropriate placement of children in alternative tuition.
- Increase the number of children leaving care achieving one or more A*- G GCSEs.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Since 2004, the council has taken major steps to increase the involvement of children and young people in making decisions about the services it provides. Consultation with children and young people is a corporate priority within the borough and the Youth Council consulted with over 1,300 children and young people on *Every child matters* outcomes to help develop CYPP2.

Data from the local authority suggest that numbers of young people aged 13-19 reached by publicly funded Youth Services and the voluntary sector are in line with

the national average. In Ofsted inspections, most schools were judged as good or outstanding in relation to pupils contributing to their local community. The council has been successful in improving opportunities for children and young people to participate in decision-making and access services. Special educational needs care officers have successfully increased the involvement of all 1,260 pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by facilitating their opportunities to contribute in some way to the discussion of their annual reviews.

In line with its corporate priority of reducing anti-social behaviour, street and gang crime and violence, the council established a Corporate Anti-Social Behaviour team in the Council's Community Safety Unit this year and has resourced specific schemes such as the Pyramid Youth Development and Lambeth North Positive Futures projects. These are successful in supporting young people, in particular Caribbean and African youth, and diverting them from criminal activities. The recent 'Phoenix Programme' located in the voluntary sector is showing signs of success in reaching young people at risk of engaging with weapons and persuading them to turn away from a life of crime. The YOS has improved significantly over the past year. All young people are now in intervention programmes following final warnings and there has been significant improvement from last year's low base.

Numbers of first-time entrants, however, in particular for British Black youth, to the Youth Justice system have increased. An innovative example of partnership and commitment to supporting the reduction in first-time entrants is the recent successful approach implemented between the Police and YOS to youth crime prevention. All young people committing minor offences are assessed and referred where appropriate to the care of the YOS rather than being issued with a formal police reprimand. The authority has increased funding, in particular to support young people at risk of offending, through newly recruited peer educators that target 'older' young people. The recidivism rate has improved and is now comparable to similar authorities. This is very positive given the high volume and serious profile of the authority's youth offending population.

The creation of a 'Team Around the Child' in three geographical areas this year is strengthening integrated working, through the partnership of over 700 professionals, to ensure that young people with additional needs are identified and supported.

Area for development

- Reduce numbers of first time entrants to the Youth Justice system especially those from Black and minority ethnic groups.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

In a borough with many challenges in the circumstances and factors that affect families' lives, the authority is implementing strategies that support the economic independence of parents and maximise the life chances of their children. Parents are well informed about the range of child care through advertising on-line, and via a programme of local outreach work in the community and children's centres. The Childcare Affordability Programme has been successful in reaching young parents and parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and facilitating the transition to work as part of the Childcare Support Scheme. Despite the high proportion of children in the council living in households where no-one works, Lambeth has been successful in attaining one of the highest uptakes of the family element of the working family tax credit nationally.

Most difficulties around homelessness and young people are tackled well and the length of stay for most young people in temporary accommodation is low. Good housing is in place especially for care leavers. Over the last three years, more young people at age 16 are now choosing to stay on in education, employment or training. Good progress has been made in reducing the overall number of young people who are not in education, employment or training at age 16, and especially successful are initiatives directed at young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and teenage mothers. Surestart Plus provides support for pregnant teenagers and young parents, and Room @ The Top works well to reintegrate young mothers back into education. There has been a significant reduction in the last year in the overall proportion of those not in education, employment or training, but numbers still remain above the national average. Not in education, employment or training figures for all minority ethnic groups, except for Black African, are well above the national average. In recognition of the need to target young people from particular groups, who are not in education, employment or training, or at risk of becoming so, there is an increase in Connexions Personal Advisors this year. A School Engagement project located in the college from this year is aiming to increase numbers of learners staying on in education.

In 2006/07, Ofsted inspection findings judged the provision for learners' economic well-being as good or better in the vast majority of schools. Progress on the 14-19 Strategy and related developments has developed greater momentum this year, primarily as schools and the college of further education are collaborating more actively. Partnership work between all stakeholders is developing a more coherent 14-19 curriculum. Employer engagement has been significantly strengthened with key employers supporting each diploma and good arrangements in place for Year 10 pupils' work experience.

Whilst levels of achievement at Levels 2 and 3 at post-16 are improving, they are low, and levels of successful and timely completion of work-based learning and apprenticeships are low. The authority was unsuccessful in the initial diploma submissions. The joint diploma in engineering with Southwark was successful for 2008 and appropriate actions are now in place developing further submissions for the next phase in 2009.

Areas for development

- Reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training from Black and minority ethnic groups.
- Improve post-16 attainment in education and training.

Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council has good capacity to improve its services for children and young people. This is demonstrated through an effective schools improvement service and a significantly improved YOS and CAMHS. Since the last APA, there is a clear commitment to the strategy and funding of multi-agency partnerships with increasingly sound outcomes for the education of young people and creation of safer local communities. The council has carefully considered local priorities through high levels of engagement with children, young people, parents and carers in setting the Local Area Agreements targets.

There is good corporate support to continuously improve children's service provision and a sound commitment to corporate parenting. A clear connection exists between the Local Area Agreements, the Corporate Plan, the PCT Operating Plan, the Youth Justice Plan, and the Children and Young Persons' Plan and this has resulted in a recently revised governance structure for the Children and Young Persons' Service Provision (CYPSP) and a re-commissioning of services, so that these are managed in line with the authority's priorities. There is good evidence of a sound framework for a joint commissioning programme where structures have now been agreed and a sound start made towards allocating joint resources.

Planning for improvement is thorough and there is increasing accountability. There is effective leadership which is reflected in the strategic decision taken by the Executive Director of Children's Services to chair the CYPSP Executive Group and the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board, and act as champion of the Teenage Pregnancy Programme. The impact of initiatives, in successfully addressing the corporate priorities of creating a safer environment and improving teenage health, has started to be evidenced through declining recidivism, reductions in serious crime and gun related offences and a reversal in the rising trend of teenage conceptions.

Strategic workforce planning is preparing for the future development needs of an integrated workforce. The council demonstrates sound financial control, good prioritisation and effective use of resources. In order to further meet its targets for Youth Offending and reduction numbers not in education, employment or training, it has committed a budgetary £1.7m growth towards improving services over the next three years.

The building of new schools as part of its 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, is a key priority for the council as, owing to significant and continuing growth in its school population, 50% of the authority's children currently attend secondary schools outside the borough.

The council's review of its CYPP shows that good progress has been made in meeting many of its objectives, although a few objectives do not appear to have equal focus. For instance, the council has not sufficiently prioritised the areas of improvement in relation to pupil exclusions and health and safety aspects of early years provision.

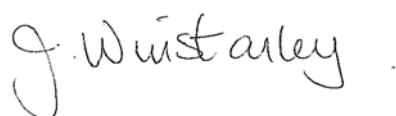
There is a rigorous approach to monitoring improvements against targets and performance indicators. Good progress has been made since the last APA in developing a cross-agency performance management system, employing a Balanced Scorecard approach.

Areas for development

- Review objectives in the CYPP and ensure that sufficient weighting is given to newly identified areas for improvement.
- Focus management attention on areas requiring greatest improvement.

The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection