

9 December 2010

Ms Debbie Jones
Executive Director, Children and Young People's Services
London Borough of Lambeth
International House, 7th Floor
6 Canterbury Crescent
London SW9 7QE

Dear Ms Jones

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 Lambeth children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Lambeth perform well.

Overall the majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. Nursery school provision is outstanding. The large majority of primary schools and most secondary schools are good or better and the proportion of good or better schools is higher in Lambeth than in other areas. There is currently only one inadequate primary school, and no secondary schools are inadequate. The majority of secondary school sixth form provision is at least good and the general further education college is good. However, the quality of childcare providers on the early years register requires improvement, with less than half of childminders and day-care providers being judged as good at their last inspection. This is a lower proportion than found elsewhere.

The local authority's adoption and fostering agencies are good. Four of the five local authority special schools are good or better. Two of the four special school sixth forms are outstanding, but two are satisfactory. Two of the three pupil referral units are only satisfactory and one is good.

Ofsted's joint area review of January 2009 judged safeguarding and services for looked after children as good. Private fostering arrangements are also good. The very recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found several strengths, many areas of satisfactory practice and two areas for further development, with no very serious weaknesses requiring urgent action.

The children's services assessment judgement is supported by outcomes for children and young people that are at least in line with the appropriate comparator for the large majority of performance measures. However, childhood obesity is rising and higher than the average for similar areas. The teenage pregnancy rate is the highest in England, despite a rate of reduction that is better than the average for England and London. All performance measures for educational attainment are broadly in line with similar areas. GCSE results for 16-year-olds improved again in 2009 and over the last five years results have improved at a faster rate than the average for similar areas. The local authority and its partners have had success in raising the achievements of some groups of vulnerable children, such as five-, 11- and 16-year-olds from low-income families.

Key areas for further development

- Improve the quality of childcare providers on the early years register so that more is good or better.
- Reduce childhood obesity and maintain the momentum of improvement in the teenage pregnancy rate.

Outcomes for children and young people

Arrangements which encourage children and young people to live healthily are good in most settings and services for children and young people in Lambeth. The majority of health outcomes for children and young people are at least in line with elsewhere, but health inequalities across the borough remain a challenge. There has been an increase in childhood obesity for both five- and 11-year-olds and the rates are higher in Lambeth than the average for similar areas. Despite significant year on year reductions since the peak years, Lambeth recorded the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in England in 2008. This, therefore, remains a key area for further development for the local authority and its partners.

There are good arrangements for helping children to stay safe in most settings and services. The very recent inspection of front-line child protection services found no very serious weaknesses requiring urgent action, several strengths and only two areas for development. The local authority has well developed and effective multi-agency responses for the protection and safeguarding of children and young people. Agencies have a clear understanding of when to refer a child to children's social care services. The local authority has highly motivated staff within social care teams who are supported by knowledgeable, experienced and accessible managers at all levels. Areas for development include ensuring assessments consistently reflect the impact and relevance of culture, ethnicity or beliefs.

The very large majority of all types of settings and services provide good opportunities for children and young people to enjoy their learning and do well. There is currently only one inadequate school, and schools causing concern receive good and valued support from the local authority. However, the quality of childcare providers on the early years register remains an area for further development; between September 2008 and June 2010 a higher proportion of Lambeth childminders were judged inadequate than across the country as a whole. Overall educational standards are improving. By the end of their reception year at school more children achieve a good level of development than in previous years and performance is broadly in line with the average for similar areas. There has been a rapid rate of improvement over the last three years, albeit from a very low base. The most recent validated national test results for 11-year-olds are broadly average and the number of primary schools not meeting the required standards in tests continues to fall. Provisional 2010 results show further improvement for both boys and girls. GCSE results for 16-year-olds are improving at a faster rate than the average for similar areas, and performance is now in the top half of all local authorities across the country. Science results are significantly better than they were previously. There were no secondary schools that did not meet the required standard in 2009.

Successful arrangements for involving children and young people in designing, planning and reviewing local services are well established in Lambeth. Children and young people receiving social care services are actively involved in their assessments and their views are taken into account. Tackling youth crime remains a priority for the area. The youth offending service has brought about a significant improvement in the number of young offenders in suitable education, work or training. However,

performance against the other key measures for youth crime is static, although generally in line with similar areas.

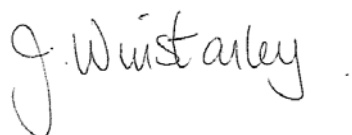
The number of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not in education, training or work continues to fall but remains above average. The local authority acknowledges the need to continue making improvements in this area. More young people are getting GCSE and A level or similar qualifications by the age of 19 than in previous years. Improvement is taking place at a faster pace in Lambeth than the average elsewhere. However, 19-year-olds from low-income families are not achieving as well at the higher level as in similar areas and the gap between them and others of the same age in the borough has widened.

Prospects for improvement

The local authority and its partners have a good understanding of needs in the local area. This has been enhanced by comprehensive consultation with children and young people themselves. A thorough review of the Children and Young People's Plan carried out for 2009-2010 reflects this understanding and effectively measures the progress that has been made against the priorities, which remain appropriate. The quality of partnership working across Lambeth remains a key strength. Further progress has been made in the last year on all of the key elements of Lambeth's vision for children and young people. The local authority and its partners have been successful in developing strong integrated services, focussed on early identification and prevention of need, such as children's centres and the 'team around the child' approach. Outcomes are improving overall for children and young people in Lambeth, with better school results and less young people without work, education or training opportunities. However, there is more to do to tackle challenging issues such as childhood obesity and the teenage pregnancy rate.

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 cursive script, reading "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment