

9 December 2010

Mr Alan Wood  
Director of Children and Families  
London Borough of Hackney  
The Learning Trust, TLC Building  
1 Reading Lane, London  
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Dear Mr Wood

## **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 Hackney 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 Hackney perform well.

The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. There is little inadequate provision overall. The large majority of nursery and primary schools, as well as secondary schools, are good or better. The general further education college is good, the sixth form college is satisfactory, and the very large majority of school sixth forms provide good or better provision for young people. However, the quality of early years and childcare provision is less good, with just under half of all settings being judged good or better. The proportion of good early years provision, particularly childminding, is lower than found elsewhere, although inspection outcomes do show some improvement in 2009–2010. Of the four local authority special schools, one is outstanding, one good and the others are satisfactory. The special school sixth form is good. Provision in the pupil referral units is mixed, with two being good and two only satisfactory. The local authority adoption and fostering agencies are both good.

The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found no areas requiring priority action. There is a balance of strengths and further areas for development within services and many areas of satisfactory practice. Private fostering arrangements are good.

The children's services assessment judgement is supported by performance that is in line with or above the appropriate comparators for the very large majority of measures for children and young people. The majority of key measures for educational attainment are in line with or above the average for similar areas, but for children and young people aged five, 11 and by age 19, outcomes are below similar area averages. However, strategies to improve outcomes for groups whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are generally successful. Results are improving for children and young people from low-income families aged 11, 16, and by age 19 performance is among the best in the country for these groups of children and young people.

### Key areas for further development

- Improve early years and childcare provision so that more is good or better.
- Improve educational outcomes for children at age five and 11.
- Improve the numbers of young people getting five good GCSE or two A levels or equivalent qualifications by age 19.

## **Outcomes for children and young people**

Arrangements to encourage children to live healthily are good in the large majority of settings and services for children and young people in Hackney. The numbers of babies being breast-fed after six weeks continues to increase and is higher than in similar areas. Childhood obesity remains a concern, as levels are in the top 25% found nationally for both five- and 11-year-olds, although broadly in line with the average for similar areas. The refreshed Healthy Weight Strategy includes actions to encourage more children to take part in physical activity; currently the number taking part in sport regularly is below average. The teenage pregnancy rate has reduced by over 20% in the last decade, which is a greater rate of reduction than seen nationally and across London. However, the rate remains comparatively high and the latest two years of data show the pregnancy rate of young women under the age of 18 has begun to increase again. Strategies to reduce the number of repeat pregnancies through the work of outreach services are proving successful.

The large majority of settings and services have good arrangements to help children and young people stay safe. The recent inspection of front-line child protection services found no very serious weaknesses requiring priority action. Hackney has a good range of effective services that support children and their families well. Social workers are well supported and have good training opportunities. There is high staff morale and professional commitment to improving outcomes for children and families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Areas for further development include improving some areas of recording and developing a better shared understanding of the use of common approaches to assessing children's needs within partner agencies.

The large majority of nursery and primary schools, as well as secondary schools, are good or better. However, there has been a significant fall in the number of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year at school. Performance is significantly below the average for similar areas. Following poor test results for 11-year-olds in 2009, provisional results show a significant improvement in 2010. Although attainment remains the lowest in London for this age group, the gap between Hackney's results and results in similar areas is narrowing. The local authority is implementing a new strategy to drive up standards in primary schools and in 2009 there was a significant reduction in the number of primary schools that did not meet the expected standards in tests. By the age of 16 results for young people are much more positive. GCSE results have improved year on year and 2009 saw a large increase in the number of young people gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. Results in Hackney are now slightly higher than found elsewhere. All secondary schools reached the expected standards in 2009.

Successful arrangements for involving children and young people in the design of local services are well established in Hackney. Children and young people have contributed to scrutiny reviews and local youth inspections. A group of children and young people in care worked with their peers to develop the Hackney Pledge to Children in Care. Tackling youth crime remains a high priority for the local authority

and their partners. Re-offending by young people in Hackney remains in line with similar areas and, by most measures, the youth offending service is performing adequately. The relatively high use of custody reflects the borough's enduring gang and group offending issues.

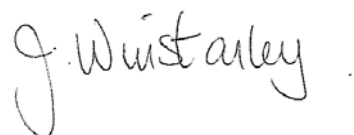
There has been a further reduction in the number of 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in work, education or training in 2010. Levels are now broadly in line with similar area averages. However, fewer young people are getting qualifications by the age of 19 than elsewhere. The numbers achieving two good A levels or equivalent increased in 2009, but at GCSE level there was a deterioration in performance from the previous year. The local authority is successfully increasing the number of 19-year-olds from low-income backgrounds achieving at the higher level and the achievement gap is small and closing.

### **Prospects for improvement**

Effective partnership working is resulting in improved outcomes for children and young people in many areas of the local authority's work. Children's services have built a track record of good performance. The Hackney Children and Young People's Plan Review 2009–2010 demonstrates that the local authority and their partners know and understand the needs of the children and young people in Hackney well. Priorities are appropriate and there is a clear acknowledgement of where further work is needed to improve outcomes. For example, a full review of childhood obesity has been conducted and the Healthy Weight Strategy has been refreshed. This has resulted in the identification of the need to prevent and tackle childhood obesity in pre-school age children. Educational outcomes at primary schools and for young people at the age of 19 are long-standing challenges in Hackney and, despite positive trends, these remain areas for further development.

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 dark ink, reading "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment