

26 November 2007

Mr P Lewis
Director of Education, Children's Services and Leisure
London Borough of Enfield
7th Floor Civic Centre
Silver Street
Enfield
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Dear Mr Lewis

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

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 Enfield consistently delivers above minimum requirements. The council's contribution to improving outcomes is good in all service functions across the five outcome areas. Of particular note is the progress that has been achieved in the number of schools achieving Healthy School status. Similarly noteworthy is the progress made in strengthening the recruitment and retention of social work staff, the development of a commissioning strategy for children's social care services and the good progress children and young people make at the end of Key Stage 4 from a low starting point. The council has responded positively to issues raised by the 2005 joint area review (JAR) and has fully addressed 13 of the 15 recommendations made in the respective report. However, insufficient progress has been achieved with partners in meeting the national target to reduce the level of teenage pregnancy. The long-term stability of placements for looked after children and young people is also an area that requires further improvement. Additionally, further improvement is also required in the standards reached across the key stages, particularly Key Stages 1 and 2, and in the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage.

Being healthy

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this area is good, with some outstanding features. Three recommendations arose from the 2005 JAR and all have been met. Very good progress has been made in increasing the number of children and young people participating in physical education and sport, both within and outside school. Some 82% of schools have gained Healthy School status.

The Cheviots Service for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities disabled children and young people, managed jointly by the council and the Primary Care Trust, is regarded as a model of excellence.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) performance is very good with very good progress toward integrated CAMHS provision. Looked after children and young people have timely access to CAMHS. Performance on health assessments for looked after children and young people is also in the top band of performance. Reducing the level of teenage conceptions is still a significant challenge and, though there has been some good progress, it is less than expected and on the current trajectory will not meet the 2010 national target. The council is, however, working proactively with local partners and seeking additional support through the regional teenage pregnancy co-ordinator and Government Office London. Operational links between primary health care staff and the council are good, with plans to fully integrate them into the four Children's Area Partnerships during 2008.

Some health indicators, such as the numbers of infants with low birth weight and the incidence of smoking during pregnancy, are above the national average. However, there is clear evidence that the council and its health partners have made recent progress in preventative work and developing health profiling and analysis to reduce health inequalities. The council has identified that there is further work to be done, particularly in responding to the specific needs of transient families and diverse ethnic groups. The Tellus2 analysis shows that most children and young people regard themselves as healthy or quite healthy.

Areas for development

- Improve the capacity and focus of the teenage pregnancy planning to meet the planned reduction required by the Government's 2010 target.
- Develop and analyse further the needs of Black and minority ethnic groups and transient families and improve the health outreach work for these groups.

Staying safe

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people remain good with some outstanding features. Three recommendations for action were made in the JAR all of which have been met. Most children and young people in the Tellus2 survey reported feeling very or quite safe although they report above average concern about safety on public transport. Successful action has been taken to reduce the numbers of children and young people killed or seriously injured on the roads.

Good performance indicator results in this area have been sustained in the past year with some areas of very good performance, for example, the number of looked after children and young people who have been adopted. The number of looked after children and young people remains low. Performance related to the number of looked after children and young people with three or more placements within a year is good and has improved to be significantly below the statistical neighbour average. However, longer-term placement stability for looked after children and young people is significantly behind that of statistical neighbours and national averages.

The level of core assessments completed is of concern and continues at a level significantly below that of statistical neighbours and national averages. The number of children and young people on the Child Protection Register is low and all are reviewed within the required timescales. The level of child protection re-registration has fallen significantly. However, the proportion of Black and minority ethnic children and young people on the Child Protection Register and in care is higher. The council has analysed this and is satisfied that there are no underlying practice concerns. The Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LCSB) is well established, supported by partners and making good progress on its agenda. There is evidence of a positive approach to raising community awareness of safeguarding and some positive engagement through community and faith groups to engage the diverse ethnic communities. The council is on target to implement the common assessment framework.

Areas for development

- Improve longer term placement stability for looked after children and young people.
- Increase the level of core assessments completed.

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. Since the last academic year, the council has continued to drive

up standards through effective steps being taken to improve provision and accelerate children and young people's rate of progress. Most schools are providing an effective education with only nine primary schools and one secondary school not achieving the floor targets. In 2006/07, a higher proportion of primary schools were judged as outstanding in comparison with similar authorities. Across the different phases, inspection findings are comparable with similar authorities. The Tellus2 survey confirmed the inspection judgement that children and young people enjoy attending school and do their best most of the time. Children and young people, however, feel that they would make better progress if lessons were more fun and interesting. This view is consistent with the local authority's stance to drive up standards. It has increased the level of support for schools in particular those designated as hard to shift. Planning for improvement is thorough and there is increased accountability. As a result of the stringent actions the numbers of schools in a category of concern, though above average, has fallen.

Standards at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 remain below the national averages but the gap is now narrower, notably in learners' performance in English. In 2006, standards at Key Stage 1 were broadly in line with the statistical neighbours. While the local authority reached the set targets in reading and exceeded those for writing, it marginally missed the mathematics targets. Rigorous challenge and a high level of intensive support have led to a steady improvement in Key Stage 2 results, particularly in English where sustained improvement over the last five years has led to performance being in line with the national average and similar authorities. Overall, progress was much slower in mathematics and science in Key Stages 2 and 3. At Key Stage 3, results were broadly average in English but just below those of similar authorities. The pace of progress is especially good at Key Stage 4. In 2006, 53% of children and young people gained five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, which was below the national average. However, the proportion of those achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics was broadly average. The 2007 unvalidated results show sustained improvement in all key stages, particularly at the end of Key Stage 4, where the authority achieved its best GCSE results with a 3.2% increase in five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, and a 6% increase in five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics.

Most Black and minority ethnic groups reach and often exceed their targets. However, their performance is below the national average and there is considerable variation across schools, with children and young people of Somalian descent being the lowest achievers. The progress of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally good or better. The number of looked after children and young people achieving a GCSE grade is above the national average. Children and young people enter from a low base but the rate of progress improves over time with many making good progress by the end of Key Stage 4. Overall, given their starting point, most children and young people achieve well.

Although children and young people get a good start to their education, the local authority recognises that a substantial proportion of children are still not acquiring the basic skills expected for three and four-year-olds before they transfer to Key Stage 1. Rapid demographic changes in the borough present significant challenges for primary schools, particularly as issues around language and mobility persist. The

Children's Area Partnerships and interventions from the local authority are used well to improve the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage. For example, there is a very good range of under-fives services for children and parents, and Foundation Stage teachers have had compulsory professional development including assistance with assessing children and young people's work.

The council has met the recommendation to improve the transition arrangements for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at Key Stages 2 and 3. Specialist appointments are planned to strengthen the implementation of the special needs policy.

Ofsted school inspection findings judged the attitudes and behaviour of children and young people as predominantly good or better. This positive picture is reflected in the relatively low number of fixed-term exclusions. Permanent exclusion is decreasing and is comparable to similar authorities but above the national average. The support for children and young people who do not attend school has improved significantly over the last two academic years. The level of attendance in both primary and secondary schools is broadly in line with the national averages and similar authorities. However, unauthorised absences, especially in primary schools, though declining, remain well above the national average.

The Children's Area Partnerships provide a strong foundation for the local authority's accelerating improvement. The partnerships are very well planned and, since April 2007, four have been strategically placed across the borough. These provide well coordinated services to meet the needs of children and young people, and parents or carers. Plans for using the Children's Area Partnerships to reach a wide range of users in order to raise aspirations are far reaching. However, at this stage, it is too early to measure their full impact on outcomes.

Areas for development

- Raise standards further at Key Stages 1 and 2 and reduce the number of schools, especially primary schools, below the floor targets.
- Increase the proportion of children and young people reaching the expected level in the Foundation Stage particularly in communication, language and literacy.
- Reduce the high level of unauthorised absence in primary schools.

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 2005/06, the council has taken major steps to increase the involvement of children and young people in making decisions about the services it provides. Council data show a year-on-year improvement between 2004 and 2006, culminating in a 37% increase in the participation rate in activities and in using

services. The introduction of a common charging policy provides all children and young people with equal access to provision. The proportion contributing to the community is below the national averages. However, Ofsted school inspection findings found that the contribution by children and young people to their local community was good or outstanding.

This positive judgement is, however, not reflected in the Tellus2 survey where over half do not feel they are enabled to take part or listened to. A significant proportion take part in the youth parliament and school council, but 65% reported they are disengaged and do not use the systems sufficiently to help shape the services. Rather, volunteering is mostly reserved for family, friends and people in the immediate locality. Despite this varied response, the council met the targets to improve the resources and opportunities for children and young people to participate in decision making.

The council's inclusive approach is evident in its provision of the Children's Area Partnerships, extended services and children's centres, which are now on target to be developed. This approach enables children and young people to have good opportunities to access a wide range of services tailored to their specific needs. For example, the Youth Justice Plan 2007/08 ensures that a good range of programmes is available for vulnerable groups. There is a race action plan, though the impact of this has not yet been assessed. There are also specific programmes to meet the needs of Black and minority ethnic groups disproportionately represented in the Youth Justice System. Appointments of specialist staff ensure that vulnerable children and young people, including those in care and children and young people with a learning difficulties and/or disabilities, can take part in all activities. Partnership work between the various services has been used well to tackle anti-social behaviour and prevent re-offending. Looked after children and young people have the same level of access to all services as their peers and their rate of convictions is similar to the national average and similar authorities. At 97%, a high proportion of looked after children and young people took part in their statutory reviews. This is a significant improvement on the previous year's participation rate.

Area for development

- Reduce the numbers of Black and minority ethnic groups not in employment or education.

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. The council has made a very good start to implementing its well-conceived plan to penetrate the obstacles that lead to poverty in order to boost the economic independence of parents and the life chances of children and young people. Detailed analyses on the needs of the population in the Children's Area Partnerships provide a clear profile of the main concerns. Whilst it is too early to assess the impact, partnership work is strong and confirms that the provision serves

the communities well. Difficulties around homelessness and young people are being tackled rigorously. Protocols and good supportive systems are in place. The high numbers of care leavers living in suitable accommodation provided by the council is above average.

In 2006/07, Ofsted school inspection findings judged the provision for economic well-being as good or better in most schools. The 14–19 provision is robust and provides good opportunities for children and young people to pursue vocational education as schools across the borough are committed to this work. Partnership work between all stakeholders is highly effective and the council has promoted collaborative work well by ensuring there are sufficient resources, human and financial, to adequately implement the 14–19 reform. Information about learner entitlement is readily available. Over the last three years the number of children and young people, including care leavers, who have chosen to stay on in education, employment and training has increased. This improvement is above the national trend. However, the level of participation in work-related training is lower than expected, partly as more young people are staying on either in school or college. The council recognises that there is still more to do in this area and has taken a strong lead on promoting employer engagement. Good progress has been made in reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. This is below average and is the lowest for London north. However, the number of those from Black and minority ethnic groups not in education, employment or training is above the national average and that for similar authorities.

The number of schools making use of the good partnership work with Connexions, enabling each young person to be carefully matched to a personal adviser, has increased. A planned approach to re-structuring Connexions within the youth service is underway and should be completed by April 2008. Although the local authority was unsuccessful in the diploma submissions, it has taken appropriate action to maintain the momentum in preparation for the next phase in 2009. The well coordinated move to realign services is enabling communities to have better access to planned provision. Advisory information on areas such as health, employment, childcare facilities and lifelong learning are readily available to local communities. Similarly, good provision is in place to meet the needs of a diverse and transient community. Guidance on developing work skills, particularly language skills, are promoted well.

Area for development

- Build on the capacity to implement the 14–19 reform.

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. Its management of these services is strong and with effective senior leadership and good corporate support to improve children's service provision. The council has a strong focus on corporate parenting and the engagement of children and young

people in its future plans. The council's review of its Children and Young People's Plan generally shows that good progress has been made in meeting its objectives, although not all objectives appear to have equal focus and it is not clear which are the key priorities. Good progress has also been made in meeting its local area agreement targets relating to children's services. The council is developing Children's Area Partnerships to act as a model for closer integrated joint-working, area-focused service development and local decision making.

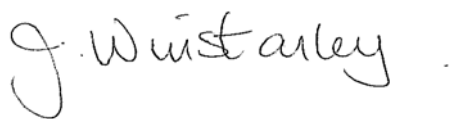
The council is negotiating with the Primary Care Trust to fully integrate health staff into a Children's Trust arrangement over the coming year and has already developed some successful examples of integrated practice. The council has anticipated the capacity challenges ahead and appointed a Children's Trust co-ordinator as well as two Children's Area Partnerships coordinator posts to move forward the integrated services agenda. Strategic workforce planning is underway to prepare for the development needs of an integrated workforce. The council implemented an effective social worker recruitment and retention strategy which has stabilised this part of the workforce in the past year. The council demonstrates sound financial control, good prioritisation and effective and innovative use of resources. A commissioning strategy is now in place for children's social care supported by detailed purchasing plans which are informed by a thorough gap and market analysis.

Area for development

- Review current objectives within the Children and Young People's Plan to ensure a realistic focus on key priorities.

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 black ink that reads "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection