

26 November 2007

Mr David Lund  
Executive Director of Children's Services  
Blackpool Borough Council  
Children and Young People's Department  
Progress House  
Clifton Road  
Blackpool  
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Dear Mr Lund

## **2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BLACKPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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 (CYPP), your action plan arising from the joint area review and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. The letter comments on progress since the recent joint area review. 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**

Blackpool Borough Council consistently delivers above minimum requirements. Blackpool's high levels of social deprivation, the fact that it is a large tourist resort, and the high levels of population mobility place significant demands on local services. The council has responded positively to the recommendations raised in the joint area review report and has made significant progress since that time. The most immediate priorities concerning arrangements for mental health provision within the Youth Offending Team and for allocating qualified social workers to looked after children have been met. The council is meeting the deadlines for most of the other recommendations, but progress is slower in two cases. The strategy for joint commissioning of services for children with complex needs is in the early stages of development. A post funded jointly with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) is helping to improve coordination between the council and health services, but there is no formal strategy in place. The setting up of formal partnership arrangements between the Youth Offending Team and providers of post-16 education and training has been hindered by staffing difficulties and at present relies on informal contacts between case workers and providers.

The contribution the council makes towards improving outcomes with regard to being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being remains good. The council's contribution to staying safe was judged to be adequate in the joint area review and it is now good because of continuing improvement in areas such as child protection and corporate parenting work. Overall, the council is making good progress with its ambitious agenda for integrating services within the new children's service directorate, and improving the life chances of children and young people in areas of significant social and economic disadvantage.

## **Being healthy**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Two recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

#### **For immediate action**

- The Blackpool PCT, and the council, should ensure that the arrangements put in place for the provision of mental health within the Youth Offending Team are robust.

#### **For action in the next six months**

- The Blackpool NHS PCT and Mental Health Trust should review management arrangements for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to ensure that there is consistency, and clarity, of access and sustained improvements in waiting times for assessment and treatment at Tier 3.

The council has made good progress in improving arrangements for the provision for mental health within the Youth Offending Team. Following the joint area review, a training needs analysis of mental health staff working within the Youth Offending Team was immediately undertaken, a training plan was developed and training delivered to all staff. The service level agreement between the Youth Offending Team and Blackpool PCT has been updated and CAMHS are now represented on the Youth Offending Team steering group. There is now a specialist mental health worker for the Youth Offending Team. There have been improvements in the percentage of young people with acute mental health needs referred to Tier 3 CAMHS services who received an assessment within five working days, from 75% in 2005-06 to 91.7% in 2006-07. Of the young people with non-acute mental health needs 100% received an assessment within 15 working days.

An internal review was undertaken in 2006 to identify issues leading to delays in accessing CAMHS treatment and an implementation group has been established to oversee the delivery of the recommendations. A CAMHS doctor has been appointed to support Tier 3 management and Tier 3 interventions/therapies have been

subcontracted to Coastal Child and Adolescent Therapy services. This is having a positive impact on waiting times and no one is waiting more than 11 weeks for an assessment.

Development of the new integrated substance misuse service has been praised by the Government Office North West as an example of best practice in the delivery of services to young people. There has been a marked increase in the number of young people aged under 18 accessing treatment. In 2005-06, 53 young people accessed treatment at Tier 3. In 2006-07, following the establishment of the new integrated service, 96 young people accessed treatment, an increase of 86%, against a target of a 20% increase. Between October and December 2006, all those referred had a specialist assessment within five days and were able to access treatments within 10 days. This is better than the national average. Access to intervention is very good. There is a very good approach to the management of alcohol misuse through the joint agency Nightsafe project. Underage drinking, and purchase of alcohol, is targeted along with the social consequences of binge drinking. In January 2007, 105 young people attended a children and young people's alcohol event called Stand Up Speak Out. As a result of the feedback received, Blackpool Youth Service, the PCT and Blackpool Young People's Council are jointly planning a young people's alcohol reduction campaign. Young people have also been involved in developing mobile sexual health provision through the Connect bus. They themselves identified the need for mobile provision in earlier consultations on the delivery of sexual health services.

The joint area review report noted the commendable work of the council to reduce teenage pregnancies. Progress has been made for the second year in reducing the numbers and the number of teenage mothers accessing education, employment and training has increased from 40 in 2004-05 to 112 in 2006-07. The percentage of young mothers having access to child care to enable take-up of training, further education or work-based learning increased from 26.2% in 2005-06 to 35.4% in 2006-07, exceeding the target of 30.1% set in the Local Area Agreements.

There has been an increase in mothers initiating breast-feeding although this remains below the national average and the numbers of mothers smoking during pregnancy has increased; it is 30% above the council's target. Good action is taken to ensure that children are immunised and rates remain high.

All schools participate in the National Healthy Schools Programme, and school inspection evidence shows that Blackpool schools are doing better than those in similar areas in promoting healthy lifestyles. The percentage of Blackpool's school children participating in at least two hours of high quality physical education and out-of-hours school sport per week rose significantly from 59% in 2003/04 to 88% in 2005/06. This was well above the national average (80%) and the national target of 75%.

Appropriate and effective attention is paid to the health needs of looked after children and young people. The numbers of looked after children having health and dental checks improved from 77% in 2005-06 to 80.2% in 2006-07. Good progress is

being made in improving transition arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities moving from children's health services into adult services. Links have now been strengthened between the council and the PCT, with the joint appointment of an Assistant Director for Health. Transition arrangements are now coordinated within a multidisciplinary team and new transfer protocols have been drawn up and shared with all agencies.

### **Area for development**

- Continue to improve breast-feeding rates and meet targets for a reduction in the numbers of mothers smoking during pregnancy.

## **Staying safe**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Four recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

#### **For immediate action**

- The council should ensure that looked after children and young people have qualified social workers allocated to them within three months.

#### **For action in the next six months**

- The Safeguarding Board should develop a framework to undertake quality audit work in relation to inter-agency planning and decision-making in child protection.
- The council should strengthen its corporate parenting work by improving understanding among its staff and establishing specific mechanisms to enable looked after children and young people to discuss and express their views about services.
- The council should make more progress in identifying the scale of bullying in schools and develop, in partnership with schools, clear strategies to ensure that the response of teachers to bullying is consistent and effective.

Since the joint area review, good progress has been made across all four recommendations. All looked after children and young people are now allocated to a qualified social worker and this is better performance than the national average. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) is developing a strategy to monitor the effectiveness of joint working and a quality assurance and audit sub-group has been established. A full-time quality assurance officer has been seconded to support the work of the board and a number of pieces of audit work have already taken place, for example, analysis of child protection data. There is now an independent

chairperson in place and a three year business plan has been produced. Prior to drawing up a proposal for a corporate parenting panel, officers and members visited other councils to establish best practice. Consultation took place with looked after children and young people and they were able to contribute their views on how the panel should be established. A looked after children's participation worker is due to be appointed. Responsibility for reducing bullying now rests with an anti-bullying champion who chairs an anti-bullying strategy group. The group has revised the anti-bullying strategy and has commissioned operational groups to deliver it in all settings used by children and young people. A system of recording and reporting incidents of bullying has been established and surveys have been undertaken to quantify children and young people's experience of bullying and their schools' responses to it. This information will be used to establish a secure baseline for the setting of improvement targets and progress monitoring.

The joint area review reported a high number of referrals of children in need. This is largely due to the number of transient families with complex needs moving into the borough, many of whom are referred by their previous councils. However, there have also been problems recording the data accurately. This issue remains a challenge for the council and it continues to monitor it closely. It has implemented a new electronic recording system and is now able to demonstrate a reduction in numbers of referrals. In addition, the council has produced a detailed leaflet for all agencies exploring the threshold criteria. A research student has also been appointed to undertake some long-term work on referral issues. Good progress has been made with the completion of initial and core assessments within timescales and this is much better than the national average. New intensive approaches to preventative work, for example, the Springboard approach, which targets the most vulnerable families in the area, are beginning to show early promising signs of impact. For example, 25 children have not been placed on the child protection register, 27 children have increased their school attendance and 13 families have avoided being evicted.

There is good placement stability for looked after children and young people and the proportion with more than three placements in a year is lower than in similar areas, or nationally. There is good progress on adoptions. The number of looked after children and young people is reducing, although numbers remain higher than average. There has been an increase in the number of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 14+ who have a transition plan in place to support their move into adult services from 79% in 2005-06 to 89% in 2006-07.

The number of children and young people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents has reduced substantially to 15 in 2005 from the baseline figure of 37. This is better than the Department of Transport target for 2010.

### **Areas for development**

- Continue to monitor carefully the number of referrals and ensure threshold criteria are well understood by all agencies.

- Continue to reduce numbers of looked after children and young people.

## Enjoying and achieving

## Grade 3

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

### For action in the next six months

- The council should set challenging targets for increasing the rate of reintegration of permanently excluded pupils.

Strategies to reduce exclusions and improve reintegration of excluded students have been developed and are proving successful. These include a high needs admission scheme, extension of the role of the exclusion officer, and family review meetings to address problems prior to return to school. Additional funding has been made available to enhance the support necessary for successful reintegration. Continuity of the curriculum between pupil referral units and mainstream schools has been improved. Assistant headteachers for each pupil referral unit have been paired with curriculum links in mainstream schools to improve planning and share best practice, and mainstream teachers have delivered elements of the core curriculum in pupil referral units. Pupil referral unit staff now routinely attend national strategy meetings led by local authority consultants. The success of these strategies can be seen in the following figures. Permanent exclusions fell significantly to 15 in 2006/07 from 40 in 2005/06. The reintegration of excluded students improved significantly from four in 2005/06 to 10 in 2006/07.

There has been above average growth of child care provision and places, and a significant increase in full day care provision. A high proportion of child care providers are judged good, or outstanding, for provision that supports enjoyment and achievement of children.

Transience continues to be a major challenge for the council and for schools. The number of children and young people moving into, and out of, the area is far higher than is typically found. School improvement work continues to have a positive impact on outcomes. There are upward trends for many aspects of educational attainment. In particular, there has been an upward trend in students' achievements at the end of Key Stage 4. Unvalidated 2007 data show that the percentage of students achieving five or more A\*-C grades has again improved from 41.3% in 2004/05 and is now over 50% for the first time. This remains below the national figure, but the rate of improvement continues to outpace that of the national trend. In the last two years no school has fallen below the 30% floor target. The council's own analysis indicates that the contextual value added score has risen from 995.7 in 2005/06 to 1009.6 in 2006/07, demonstrating good progress from Key Stages 2 to 4. At Key Stage 2 unvalidated 2007 data suggest that the proportions of pupils achieving the



expected levels are now in line with national averages. Attainment at Key Stage 1 is still below national levels, reflecting pupils' lower levels of skill when they start school.

The attainment of students who lack stable backgrounds in their schooling is lower than other students and the council has developed two transience centres to help to tackle this. These are attached to schools and provide a period of assessment and needs identification to ensure that adequate support is given when students begin their permanent school placements.

Ofsted inspection judgements show that almost all schools are at least satisfactory and many are good or better. Two schools and the pupil referral unit, which were in inspection categories of concern, have improved to at least a satisfactory standard. The only school currently in an inspection category of concern is making satisfactory progress. All three special schools were judged to be outstanding in their most recent inspections.

The looked after children's team has been transferred to the council's learning and achievement division to ensure a clearer focus on raising standards. Additional support has also been provided to looked after children and young people at the point of selecting GCSE options, at the point of selecting a secondary school and around test and examination times, to help boost their educational attainment. The achievement of looked after children and young people in their final year of compulsory schooling improved in 2007, following a drop in 2006. The proportion of looked after children and young people who achieved one or more GCSE grades A\*-G rose from 40% in 2006 to 71% in 2007. This is well above the national average of 55%. Similarly, in 2007, 14% of looked after children and young people achieved five or more higher grade GCSEs compared with none in 2006. Again, this is better than the national average of 9.8%.

There are effective strategies to encourage participation and promote students' other achievements as well as raising aspirations. These include effective council support for outdoor visits and activities, the music service arrangements and celebratory events. Qualitative evidence provides numerous examples of success.

Attendance in Blackpool schools remains below the national average in both primary and secondary schools, but the gap between attendance of pupils in Blackpool and the national average is narrowing.

### **Area for development**

- Improve attendance in both primary and secondary schools.

## Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

#### For action in the next six months

- The council should ensure that services for young carers are further developed to meet needs.

The council has made very good progress in taking forward this recommendation. A lead officer post for young carers has now been established along with a multi-agency young carers steering group. A young carers' development worker is now in place to identify young carers early, to undertake assessment and provide packages of support. A framework for a young carers' strategy has been agreed and multi-agency workshops have helped to raise the profile of young carers in Blackpool.

The joint area review reported that young people's involvement in decision-making is a high priority for the council and this continues to be the case. In 2006, Blackpool won Council of the Year for its work in improving the engagement of young people in the delivery and development of services. The annual review of the CYPP has clear references under each priority indicating how children and young people have been involved and the differences made due to their contributions. Of 54 identified organisations working with children and young people in Blackpool, 48 have established consultative groups with children and young people, against a target of 37. Each consultative group democratically elects members to Blackpool Young People's Council, which engages strategically with the council and key partners. Monthly meetings of Blackpool Young People's Council have covered key issues such as the media, transport, law and order, bullying, and health. In identifying their key issues for 2007/08, Blackpool Young People's Council has engaged a wide range of children and young people through consultation events and surveys, including quarterly questionnaires to all school councils and other forums. Over 750 children and young people participated in elections to the UK Youth Parliament, a sevenfold increase in participation rates compared with the previous elections.

There has been a steady increase in the number of young people reached by the youth service and the target of 25% involvement has been exceeded. The work of the peer education development worker has been highly successful in recruiting young people to act as mentors for their peers on issues such as sexual health and teenage pregnancy, alcohol and substance misuse. Twenty children and young people have been involved in the management of the delivery of the Youth Opportunities Fund. The positive contribution of children and young people was judged to be good, or outstanding, in the majority of schools inspected.



An additional £20,000 funding has been provided to enable children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to engage in social activities based on their needs and choices. Work is being undertaken with MENCAP to develop a toolkit to enable more effective decision-making with young people and there has been a steady increase of young people aged 14+ with a transition plan in place.

Numbers of first-time entrants to the youth justice system and rates of re-offending of young people have increased. However, there has been a reduction in the numbers of serious offences committed. The work of the youth offending team is not as effective as other teams in the North West region due, in part, to difficulties in staffing at all levels. This is now being tackled vigorously.

### **Area for development**

- Reduce rates of re-offending and reduce numbers of first-time entrants into the youth justice system.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

### **For action in the next six months**

- The council should ensure that the youth offending team develops effective partnerships with providers of post-16 education and training to ensure that appropriate programmes of learning are made available to young offenders.

Plans to establish formal partnerships with local providers of post-16 education and training have been hampered by difficulties in management and staffing in the youth offending team. The monitoring framework arrangements scheduled to be in place by October 2006 have not been fully implemented. Nevertheless, the proportion of young offenders in education, training or employment is above the national average. Informal contact between case workers and providers helps to ensure that progress is monitored. The council appointed an interim youth offending team manager in May 2007 and intends to recruit a permanent manager shortly.

The council continues to face the challenges associated with an area in economic decline. The proportion of children and young people in households where no one is working has increased and is above that found in similar areas. The proportion of 19 year olds who achieve a Level 2 qualification shows an upward trend, from 54.6% in 2004 to 60.6% in 2006. For achievement of a Level 3 by age 19 there was a slight drop in 2006. Both remain below similar areas and the national average. Progress is hampered by the numbers of young people arriving in Blackpool at a late stage of their education, including many with significant gaps in their schooling.

The proportion of young people who complete apprenticeships has risen from 15.9% in 2004/05 to 53.5% in 2005/06 and is now better than that found nationally. Work on raising aspirations has included work with parents and projects to raise girls' aspirations.

Over the last year, the Blackpool 14–19 Federation has been established and Blackpool's 14–19 Strategy has been reviewed. An updated strategy was launched in February 2007. Collaborative arrangements exist between the eight secondary schools and two colleges. These are helping to extend the range of choices in Key Stage 4, and more vocational courses are now available. Innovative plans are being developed for a vocationally based Studio School in the south of Blackpool which will address a shortage of 14–19 vocational opportunities in that area. The early pilot project has recruited 25 students. A further 11 students have embarked on another new initiative, route 12, designed to deliver five or more good GCSE grades over three years.

The proportion of young people completing Year 11 who continue in learning is improving at a similar rate to that found nationally, although it remains below national figures. Strategies to reduce the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training have been highly effective. The percentage of young people aged 16–18 who are in this group has reduced significantly and is now lower than that found in similar areas.

The progression of looked after children and young people at age 16 who are in education, employment or training is good. The proportion of care leavers at age 19 in education, employment or training is very good. The proportion living in suitable accommodation is above the national average.

A specialist child care coordinator, with a focus on teenage parents, has successfully promoted access to child care. As a consequence, more young mothers are taking up, or returning to education and training and the percentage is well above the national average.

### **Areas for development**

- Ensure that the 14–19 plan is implemented effectively.
- Improve post-16 participation in education and training.

## **Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good, and its management of these services is good. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

### **For action in the next six months**

- The council and its partners should develop a strategy for joint commissioning of services for children and young people with specialist and complex needs.

The appointment of a jointly funded assistant director's post to lead on health has improved liaison between the council and the PCT and this is beneficial in commissioning services. The multi-agency commissioning strategy planned for March 2007 has not yet been established but early work to develop frameworks for joint commissioning is underway. The review of the CYPP notes that this is likely to take some time, in order to ensure that all agencies agree with, and can sign up to, joint commissioning principles.

High levels of deprivation mean that overall outcomes in Blackpool remain below the national average, but the work of the council is having a very positive impact in key areas. The focus in the CYPP on challenging and far-reaching ambitions for the town and its young people is a strength. These ambitions are based on a thorough and detailed analysis of need and are well understood by council staff and partners. Good progress is being made in terms of integration of services. Change management has involved widespread consultation with staff and was supported with external expertise. Delivery plans for the nine priorities of the CYPP have been drawn up. Responsibilities are clearly defined and understood. There is strong and effective leadership at senior level with a sharp focus on improving outcomes for children and young people. Good progress has been made in implementing most of the joint area review recommendations. A culture of partnership and multidisciplinary working is developing effectively to the benefit of children and young people. There have been developments in children's centres, extended schools, the Springboard project, early support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, Awaken team (protecting children and young people from sexual exploitation) and a new integrated young people's substance misuse team. There are many examples of success with integrated service delivery. For example, the Springboard initiative targets the most vulnerable families and through interventions has been able to demonstrate improved outcomes for family members. The location of school-based children's centres has been informed by an analysis of need, utilising the existing Sure Start centres in a hub and spoke model to maximise effective use of resources. A total of 12 children's centres are planned. Blackpool is a pilot authority for budget holding lead professionals. Progress has been made with the 14–19 plan and there are some innovative projects developing to raise aspirations and seek means of raising academic attainment amongst groups at most risk of low attainment.

In keeping with moves towards integration of services the youth offending team was moved to the children's services department. Vacancies in the team have reduced from 40% to 20% and most are expected to be filled shortly.

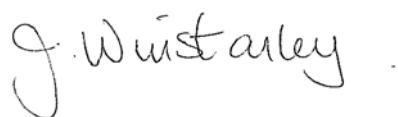
### **Area for development**

- Ensure that the multi-agency commissioning strategy for services for children with specialist and complex needs is developed and implemented.

Overall the council has demonstrated good progress in meeting the joint area review recommendations, and has shown good capacity to maintain and improve further its services for children and young people.

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 "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager  
Local Services Inspection