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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Jones

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	4
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	4
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	4

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

Wandsworth Council delivers services well above minimum requirements for children and young people. The council is securing improvements in outcomes across the majority of service areas. Progress has been made with the integration of children's services. Collaborative planning and joint commissioning are driven by the requirements of *Every Child Matters*. Strategic partnerships are strong. The Local Safeguarding Children Board was established on 1 April 2006 and partner arrangements are in place. The Chief Executive continues to hold the interim role of Director of Children's Services. A permanent appointment will be made by 2008. Elected members are currently reviewing the executive management structure and decisions on the future configuration of departments should be agreed by November 2006.

Leadership at a senior level across the council is effectively focused on continuous improvement. This is evident in the good progress made in most of the areas for improvement from last year's APA. In some areas, excellent progress has been made. The council has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for improvement. Resources are well targeted. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) sets clear, challenging targets, based on a sound analysis of need. The corporate commitment to the involvement and participation of young people, parents and carers in decision making is very strong and embedded throughout the council. The council provides excellent value for money and demonstrates excellent capacity for further improvement.

Being healthy

The contribution the council makes towards improving the health of children and young people is excellent. There is an integrated, effectively coordinated approach to the provision of services to promote and improve health. The integrated children's centres have enhanced access to preventative health services. The overall health of looked after children is comprehensively monitored and supported. A dedicated health professional provides one-to-one support in a timely fashion. Annual health and dental assessments improved from 85% to 88% mainly as a result of the proactive work of the looked after children's nurse in targeting young people who refused to see a general practitioner. The 'Keepers Club' for looked after children aged 10 to 13 years is well attended and strongly promotes health issues. Four looked after children participate in the work of the Health Steering Group.

Teenage pregnancy rates have continued to decline. The council is in the top 36% of councils nationally having achieved more than a 15% reduction in conceptions. There is a high rate of pregnancy amongst girls aged 16. However, the council has appropriate plans to address this in specific geographical areas.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are being developed effectively with 24-hour access. Specialist mental health assessment is undertaken within 24-hours, if required. Developments include the secondment of specialist workers into social work teams and family centres. Plans are in place to extend CAMHS to children and young people with learning disabilities up to the age of 18. Specialist work with adolescents is being reviewed.

A range of initiatives involving teachers and pupils has raised awareness of substance misuse. These include counselling services aimed at young people. A 'theatre in education' programme on drug substance misuse involved Year 6 pupils in 31 schools with sessions available for parents. A residential drug awareness course was held for 15 secondary school teachers. Particular outcomes have been a 136% increase in the number of young women receiving support through outreach sessions in targeted areas. However, the council has not been systematic enough in recording the numbers of young people under 18 receiving substance misuse treatment and is seeking to address this in conjunction with health partners.

Timescales for referrals and access to services for young offenders requiring substance misuse assessment are excellent. The council recognises that screening for young offenders is a priority. Greater collaboration between the youth offending team and CAMHS has facilitated universal assessment of children and young people with acute and non-acute mental health difficulties.

The council provides comprehensive support systems for families with young children with disabilities. Dedicated key workers engage very effectively with parents and carers. Health services are offered by health visitors and professionals in the integrated Sure Start centre. An innovative Virtual Team has been established to promote sexual health initiatives aimed at young people.

Health is actively promoted in schools with a high proportion participating in the Healthy Schools scheme. Progress with accreditation is good with 61 out of 80 schools taking part and 45 achieving level 3 compared to 40 in 2005. There has been an effective focus on healthy eating in schools with freshly cooked produce rising from 55% to 95%. A good uptake of school meals has been maintained.

Staying safe

The council's children's services make an excellent contribution towards promoting and securing the safety of children and young people in the area. The Local Safeguarding Children Board has now been established. The council has placed a very strong emphasis on ensuring that key partner agencies have a coordinated approach to safeguarding, including protecting vulnerable children and young people. Strategies and protocols are in place for routinely sharing information and applying thresholds. All child protection cases and looked after children are allocated to qualified social workers.

Action plans from the recent Serious Case Reviews have been implemented and lessons learned. Practice has been strengthened with earlier intervention; focused, comprehensive assessments to meet individual needs; and comprehensive risk assessment to support the coordination and planning processes across agencies that safeguard and promote welfare. A Safeguarding Practice development manager is now in post and oversees training provided for statutory, community and voluntary agencies.

Protocols are in place to undertake Criminal Records Bureau checks of all personnel who work with children. Whistle blowing polices are established and accessible to both staff and young people. Evidence from the inspection of schools since September 2005 indicates that the pupils' care, well-being and health and safety are good or better.

There has been improvement in the stability of placements and this remains a focus for longer term strategic planning. The council is succeeding in its objective of reducing the numbers of looked after children in residential care. Performance on adoptions is now very good and the numbers of looked after children have reduced. Private fostering notifications have increased to 33 children following a recent awareness and publicity campaign. The number of treatment foster care places has increased slightly.

Statutory reviews of looked after children are not sufficiently timely. However, there are ambitious targets for improvement in place. All care leavers have pathway plans. Excellent performance has been maintained in the numbers of children and young people re-registered on the Child Protection Register. However, there is room for improvement in reducing the time children remain on the register.

Referrals of children in need are well managed with many being redirected to appropriate support services without the need for assessment. The council monitors referrals carefully to ensure that responses are appropriate and full assessments are carried out where necessary.

The expansion of preventative services and improved quality in assessment has resulted in a further reduction in the number of looked after children and the proportion on the Child Protection Register. The percentage of core assessments completed within timescales has improved and very good performance has been sustained.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the council makes to ensuring children and young people achieve and enjoy their education is excellent. There is a strong commitment to involving parents and carers in supporting young learners. In particular, Sure Start programmes and the development of integrated children's centres have been effectively focused on supporting families where children are vulnerable. The council is on track to meet its target of 12 extended schools offering full services by September 2006. This expansion of provision will further enhance local services and the range of support available to learners and families.

The council has well established and effective systems for tracking the achievements of children and young people. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is broadly in line with the national. Outcomes in Key Stages 1 to 4 have improved significantly and are either in line with, or exceed, neighbours. In Key Stage 1, the council is the most improved nationally in writing and the third most improved in reading. This impressive performance is sustained in English at Key Stage 2 where they are the second most improved nationally and above the national average. There are still significant challenges in securing standards in a number of primary schools where performance declined.

Key Stage 3 results show good improvement. The achievement of boys remains a concern in comparison with girls. There is an above national average difference in English, mathematics and science. In Key Stage 4 the number of pupils achieving higher GCSE grades improved and exceeds the national average. Pupils make good progress between Key Stage 1 and 2 and Key Stage 2 and GCSE. Generally, learners are reaching higher standards than might be expected given their prior attainment.

There is a strong commitment to improving outcomes and eradicating underachievement amongst vulnerable groups within the diverse community served by the council. Black and minority ethnic learners are well supported with some groups making good progress. A comprehensive programme of support is in place for looked after children, which includes home tuition, mentoring and additional help to develop literacy and numeracy skills. The number of looked after children in Year 11 achieving five A* to G and five A* to C GCSE grades has increased significantly in comparison to last year's results.

Support for schools causing concern is effective. The one secondary school in special measures was judged by Ofsted to be making satisfactory progress when it was last monitored. The three keys to success schools (schools considered to be facing the most challenging circumstances) have secured good improvements in pupils' achievement.

Attendance has improved in primary and secondary schools. In the latter it is above neighbours and the national average. In the primary phase, it remains below the national average with both authorised and unauthorised absence higher. The council recognises that improving the attendance of looked after children is a priority. Exclusions continue to decline; schools participating in the national Behaviour Improvement Programme show a marked reduction. However, fixed-term exclusions in primary and secondary schools are above London and national averages. Permanent exclusions from secondary schools remain high.

Tailored alternative programmes for out-of-school pupils are available through the Pupil Referral Unit. Learners engage well with the programmes but the number re-integrating into mainstream settings is low.

The majority of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Standard test and GCSE results in 2005 show significant improvement in the attainment of school action plus pupils. Provision for pupils with additional needs is being extended in five specialist schools and specialist resource centres are being developed in mainstream schools.

There is a good variety of recreational facilities available to children and young people that contribute to their development and enhance their enjoyment and achievement.

Making a positive contribution

The council's contribution to outcomes in this area is excellent. There are effective strategies in place for consulting children and young people and involving them in decision making. A number of creative mechanisms are in place to enable young people to

influence the development of services within the council. The new Youth Forum was launched in July 2005. This marked the beginning of a sequence of events to consult on the government's *Youth Matters* green paper. The Wandsworth Community Empowerment Fund Network brings together local community and voluntary organisations to gather the views of young people. The latest technology is used to increase participation. These initiatives provide opportunities for young people to take responsibility and develop confidence, knowledge and skills. For example, environmental awareness is increased through the London Schools Environment Award. The social and emotional development of children is well supported not only through projects of this kind but also through Sure Start local programmes and integrated children's centres where there is a high level of parent representation.

Children and young people are well supported in facing challenges in their lives. There is an extensive range of services to meet the needs of the diverse community including vulnerable groups and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many initiatives help young people to develop life skills and independence. For example, the council has opened a respite service and appointed a Youth Service Coordinator for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There has been a relatively small decline in child protection reviews. More looked after children are contributing their opinions in reviews. The council has a strong commitment to their involvement in decision making. There is a creative use of information and communication technology to ensure the participation of children and young people who do not physically attend reviews. Looked after children and care leavers are routinely involved in staff appointments. Specific training supports their contribution to these activities.

The council's performance in the prevention of youth offending and anti social behaviour continues to be very strong. There is a 20% reduction in overall recidivism and good outcomes for those participating in the persistent offenders' project.

Achieving economic well-being

The council's contribution to outcomes in this area is excellent. Through its partnership with schools, the Learning and Skills Council, Connexions, employers and the voluntary sector, the council makes a significant positive impact on the economic well-being of the communities that it serves. The council has robust procedures to ensure all young people are tracked. The proportion of 16 to 18 year olds in employment, education and training is high. A comprehensive range of appropriate initiatives is in place to support the transition of young people to and from education and employment. There has been a good reduction in the proportion of young people aged 16 to 19 not in education, employment and training (NEET). Having reduced numbers to 6.9%, the council is well placed to meet its 2010 target of 6.2%. This compares favourably with the 10.5% average for central London authorities in 2005. Uptake of family learning has more than doubled. Youth employment has increased and is the highest in central London. Collaboration with Connexions is highly effective. Three new personal advisers have been appointed. They will target 16 to 18 year olds who have been NEET for 20 weeks or more. The proportion

of young offenders remaining in education, employment and training is above London and national averages.

Good progress has been made in developing a wider curriculum and a more coherent approach to 14-19 education. All providers within the council have given presentations outlining the programmes offered to Year 11 pupils. Local schools are positive about combining the courses available into a coherent area wide prospectus. The first event to publicise post-16 options for Year 11 pupils and their parents was well received. The council has embraced its pivotal role within the key partnerships. Strategic planning through the 14 to 19 forum is well advanced. Clear development priorities have been agreed as a result of a commissioned needs, curriculum and skills audit. Standards at level 3 General Certificate of Education/Vocational Certificate of Education are below the national figure but continue to improve and now compare favourably with neighbours. Increased numbers of young people are achieving level 2 but the range and flexibility of level 1 and 2 vocational courses is not yet fully meeting the needs of learners.

Partnership with the housing department is effective. The quality and suitability of housing has been improved substantially. The proportion of 'non-decent' homes was reduced by 70% in 2005/06 and the council is well ahead of its target to meet the decent homes standard by 2010. The percentage of care leavers aged 19 in suitable accommodation has increased slightly and is higher than that achieved by comparable councils. The use of temporary accommodation has been significantly reduced in the last two years. Thorough needs analysis has resulted in some resources being refocused to meet the requirements of those who need high support accommodation. For instance, the New Arrivals project which includes children of asylum seekers, has been significantly extended to accommodate twice as many young people.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

There is robust and effective management of children's services in the council and, overall, outcomes for service users are improving. Capacity for further improvement is excellent.

The council, and its partners, are ambitious for children and young people. They have a strong corporate commitment to continuous improvement. Partnership is cohesive because it is based on a clear set of shared intentions. The priorities in the CYPP have been identified with the involvement of children, young people, parents and carers. They have been established in response to a comprehensive assessment of need and are linked to challenging targets for improvement.

Good progress is being made in developing a Common Assessment Framework and effective supporting information systems. Its implementation is given high priority in the CYPP.

The council provides excellent value for money. Resources are well targeted; deployment is regularly reviewed and, when necessary, resources are re-designated to meet emerging needs. Management is responsive to the needs of individual children and young people

and to the needs of vulnerable groups. Focused support for specific groups has improved outcomes significantly.

Governance structures for the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) are well established within the broader Local Strategic Partnership. Performance across agencies is monitored in relationship to the *Every Child Matters* agenda. Performance management is embedded in practice and highly effective. Frameworks for joint commissioning have been strengthened and pooled budget arrangements are in place. A Children's Trust Development Manager has been appointed to ensure that the management of trusts is focused on the priorities for improvement. The local voluntary and community sector is engaged at a strategic level through the CYPSP. The council acknowledges that the appointment of a permanent Director of Children's Services will require a development of the current management structure.

Raising achievement and inclusion are central to the shared vision of the council. A high priority is given to the corporate equality plan and the council is making good progress towards achieving its ambitious targets. Self-assessment demonstrates a clear and detailed understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. Support for schools is effective. Strong improvement is evident in the achievements of children and young people. The council has successfully focused on developing capacity in schools through effective leadership and self-evaluation. Good progress has been made with the areas for improvement identified in the APA in 2005. Recruitment and retention difficulties and rising vacancies in social care services remain a concern. However, appropriate action plans are in place to address these challenges.

The council successfully encourages a high level of involvement from children and young people and is securing improvements across services.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage conception • progress towards healthy schools target • support for looked after children. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • under 16 conception rate • recording the numbers of young people under 18 receiving substance misuse services.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding Board in place • falling numbers of looked after children and children on the Child Protection Register • more looked after children adopted. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • duration on the Child Protection Register • timeliness of statutory reviews for looked after children.

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued good educational achievement for looked after children • majority of newly looked after children placed within 20 miles of home • good improvement in pupils' attainment in Key Stages 1 to 4. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievement of Black and ethnic minority groups • attendance of looked after children and primary children at school.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children • participation of looked after children in reviews. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of young people remaining in education, employment and training, including care leavers • uptake of family learning. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • range and flexibility of level 1 and 2 vocational courses.
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good budget planning • resources for family support • effective leadership. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruitment and retention of social care staff.

Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

- Impact of the council's actions to raise standards in schools across all key stages.
- Impact of the council's strategy to improve recruitment and retention in children's social care.
- The alignment of management structures to the delivery of integrated services.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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