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Mr Chris Pratt
Corporate Director Children and Young People's Service
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Trafford Town Hall
Talbot Road
Stretford
Manchester
M32 0TH

Dear Mr Pratt

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council 2008

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children's services

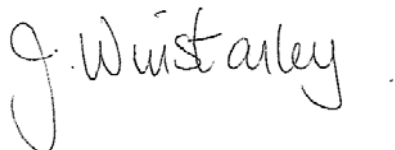
Grade 3

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council continues to deliver good services. The pace of progress has been good in most areas since the APA in 2007. The management of services is good, as is the capacity to improve them further. The council provides strong and ambitious leadership. Priorities are clear and actions are focused on where they will have the greatest impact on improving children and young people's chances in life. Support for health is good although progress in ensuring adequate access to the full range of child and adolescent mental health services has been slow. The number of teenage conceptions has reduced from a very high level. Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are good. Improvements in the educational outcomes for children and young people, including vulnerable groups, are sustained and continue to be better than in similar councils and nationally. However, the number of vulnerable children and young people excluded from school continues to rise overall. Children and young people make good use of the many opportunities to express their views and make a positive contribution to their schools and communities. Despite improvements, re-offending rates still remain higher than averages nationally and for similar councils. Good provision is made to prepare young people for work. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training has reduced, yet the proportion of vulnerable young people who remain in this category is higher than in similar councils. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development is consistent with the evidence.

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.

We are grateful for the information you provided as part of this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues in preparing for the assessment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection

Major strengths and important weaknesses

Major strengths	Important weaknesses and areas for development
<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The vast majority of looked after children and young people (94%) have their teeth checked by dentists and received an annual health assessment in the last 12 months. ▪ The high proportion of schools who achieve Healthy School status. ▪ Infant mortality continues to be below benchmark figures and national averages. 	<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young people between the ages of 16 and 17 do not have access to a full range of child and adolescent mental health services.
<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The success of initial assessments in identifying need has resulted in repeat referrals being lower than average for the second year running. Performance in relation to the timeliness of assessments is good and significantly better than similar councils and the national average. ▪ The majority of the council children's homes have been rated as good with some outstanding features. A recent fostering inspection also rated the service as good with an outstanding grade for Positive Contribution. ▪ The council continues to be successful in placing a high proportion of looked after children with family and friends. 	<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of children who are subject to child protection plans has increased significantly on top of what was already a high figure in the previous year. ▪ The number of looked after children experiencing three or more placements during the year has increased and is higher than the average nationally and for similar councils. The numbers of looked after children has also increased and is higher than figures for similar councils.
<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The above average attainment and continuing trend of improvement in schools at all key stages and in post-16 education and training. ▪ The significant increase since the 2007 APA in the number of looked after children who take GCSE or equivalent examinations (from 58% to 82%). The proportion of care leavers who leave school with qualifications is higher than that seen nationally and in line with similar councils. ▪ The high proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be good or outstanding. 	<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Action taken by the council to increase the availability of suitable alternative provision for vulnerable groups has had a marginal impact on the small number of children permanently excluded from secondary school. ▪ The continuing rise in the rates of fixed-term exclusions from secondary schools for young people with statements of special educational need, the figure is now higher than the average nationally and for similar councils.

<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The excellent and sustained commitment to ensuring that young people participate in local democratic process has led to improvements in service design, evaluation and delivery. ▪ The council has continued to build on what was already an impressive performance in the participation of looked after children in their reviews. ▪ The council and its partners demonstrate good practice in identifying and supporting the specific needs of young carers which allows them to function in a safe and supportive context. 	<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Although improving, re-offending rates remain higher than comparable councils and the national average.
<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The very high proportions of young people who achieve Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19. ▪ The strong partnership arrangements that result in good progress on the 14 to 19 strategy and a broad mix of curriculum across the 14 to 19 age range. ▪ The consistently high take up of post-16 learning. The proportion of young people who leave school and continue in full-time education or training is above that of similar councils and national trends. 	<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The insufficient support for care leavers in 2008. The number of young people who had pathway plans that were regularly reviewed by a Personal Adviser was low compared to similar councils and the national picture. ▪ The higher than average proportion of young people from vulnerable groups not in education, employment or training compared to similar councils. Progress in re-engaging young people categorised as not in education, employment or training is slow compared to similar councils.
<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children's services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The strong senior leadership with vision and ambition, delivering a service that represents good value for money. ▪ The very strong and improving provision in schools and in post-16 education and training. ▪ The improvements made against the majority of areas for development identified in the APA for 2007. 	<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children's services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The timeliness and impact of action taken varies considerably between different aspects of service delivery.