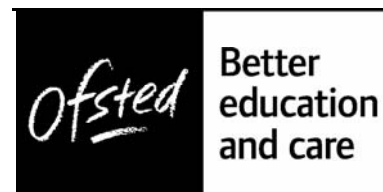


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Mr Chris Pratt
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M32 0TH

1 November 2006

Dear Mr Pratt

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN TRAFFORD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment process for your local authority. The judgements reflect the outcomes of the joint area review (JAR) and the updated self-assessment provided by the council. We are grateful for the information that you provided to support this process and for the time that you and your colleagues have given to discussing relevant issues.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	2

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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

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council consistently delivers at least minimum requirements for children and young people, with good outcomes for being healthy, enjoying and achieving, and achieving economic well-being. Overall, outcomes for children and young people in Trafford are good. The contribution of the local authority's social care services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people is adequate. The council is committed to sustainable improvement of all services for children and young people, particularly focusing on improvements for staying safe and making a positive contribution. The council has responded positively to the recommendations and issues raised in the JAR undertaken in January 2006 with growing evidence of enhanced joint working between services. The authority's capacity to improve its services further is good.

Being healthy

The council makes a good contribution towards improving the health of children and young people in the area. The JAR made two recommendations for action in the longer term.

- Review Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to develop effective strategies for outreach services for children and young people with mental health needs.
- Review the provision of dental services and promote more consistent access to dental services by all children including those from the more deprived areas of the borough.

Trafford Council has made good progress against this first recommendation in the time available. It has completed a review of the CAMHS structure and governance. This has led to further developments in strategy and services being achieved. Linking the multi-agency CAMHS Strategy more directly with commissioning and performance management, has led to the following service developments:

- for children and young people requiring specialist support, CAMHS now have a single referral and assessment process
- specialist CAMHS support is available to looked after children, youth offending team (YOT) and substance misuse services
- the waiting time for an appointment with the CAMHS is now reduced to one week.

Trafford has made good progress against the second JAR recommendation in the time available. The council has engaged with the local Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and developed an action plan to both review and improve services to those children in the most deprived areas of the borough by December 2006. Progress already achieved in this area includes:

- the development of an oral health strategy
- 7,000 additional units of dentist activity being commissioned by the PCTs
- five dental suites being included in the new Stretford Memorial health services development
- additional community dentists being employed by the PCT.

Staying safe

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. The JAR recommended one action to be taken over the next six months.

- Evaluate current arrangements for the engagement of the police in all safeguarding activities and agree joint strategies for improved engagement.

The council has already made progress in improving engagement with the police. The police have improved their procedures for identifying child protection issues, for example in cases of domestic violence. The police are committed to increasing their capacity to attend child protection conferences and reviews by looking at current practice and new ways of working. Additionally, the police have been given access to and training to use Trafford's social care computer system. Police officers are deployed on site in the two secondary schools where there is greatest need.

Trafford's self-assessment and updated social care dataset indicate significant changes in activity levels in the key areas of assessments and child protection over the last 12 months.

Referrals received by Trafford Council fell to the lowest number for the last five years to 470 per 10,000 population. This is now lower than comparator authorities (588 per 10,000 population). The number of repeat referrals increased significantly from 5.8% to 22.9% and this brings Trafford in line with comparators.

A low number of referrals progressed to an initial assessment (29.2%). This is an increase from 19.9% last year but is still well below comparator authorities (45.8%). Although the number of initial assessment had increased by only a third, the number of core assessments undertaken per 10,000 population was five times greater than the previous year (14.9 to 77.7), bringing the council in line with the England average. The council's performance on dealing with initial and core assessments in a timely manner has remained good.

The JAR identified that the initial assessments undertaken by the council were good or adequate. Thresholds for intervention for child protection were judged in the JAR to be clear and well understood. The increase in core assessments and child protection activity suggests child protection cases are being accurately and appropriately identified and referred to the council.

Over the last twelve months the number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) rose from 25.0 to 33.6 per 10,000 population. The registration rate rose from 25.6 to 38.2 per 10,000 population. These are now well above the figures for comparators. The number of children who were re-registered on the CPR rose from 11% to 19% and this figure is now slightly above those of comparator authorities.

Some of the increases of children on the CPR and re-registrations can be attributed to a small number of families containing large sibling groups who have been assessed and placed on the register over the last twelve months. However, this cannot completely account for all the changes.

The council now has a new computer system. This will enable performance to be monitored in a more accurate and robust way. The council believes that this year's data is a more accurate reflection of performance than previously. The council intends to monitor progress and changes in key areas closely over the next 12 months. The council is also auditing and reviewing individual cases of children looked after and on the CPR to ensure thresholds continue to be met appropriately for children and young people.

During the last two years the council has been undertaking work with partner agencies to raise awareness about child protection, for example by improving training provided to school staff. The council has raised awareness around key situations, which may not previously have been recognised as potential child protection issues. Domestic violence referrals have significantly increased over the last twelve months. The council has also learned from previous serious case reviews to inform its own and its partners' practices.

The council has already recognised the potential impact of increased activity on levels of resources and will need to continue to monitor trends, thresholds and changes over the next twelve months.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. The joint area review highlighted two actions to be taken immediately.

- Improve the quality of behaviour support by ensuring that there is a coherent behaviour support framework that is understood and accessible to all schools and that the behaviour support improvement plan has identified measurable outcomes.
- Improve educational provision for all children and young people who have been permanently excluded from school, including safe accommodation for care leavers.

On both recommendations the council has made an appropriate response and an action plan is in place to improve performance. (The council's response to providing safe accommodation for care leavers is considered under the achieving economic well-being outcome.)

In tackling this first recommendation the council has clarified roles, responsibilities and procedures, including some restructuring of behavioural support services, within the target time-scale. The council's self-assessment indicates that these services are now more responsive and that referral procedures are better understood and used. A systematic professional development programme for school staff is scheduled to commence in the autumn term of 2006. The role of the schools' Link Advisers has been developed to include

monitoring the impact of behaviour support. These developments are in line with the council's action plan with a completion date of April 2007.

In tackling this second recommendation the council is dealing with weaknesses in the provision of pupil referral units (PRUs) for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 through better funding, staffing, accommodation and resources and an emphasis on early reintegration and increased flexible learning opportunities. To improve accommodation and resources the Key Stage 4 PRU is moving to a former primary school in September 2006. An associate headteacher has been commissioned from September 2006 to March 2007 with a view to strengthening the leadership and management of the unit. These are sound actions, which should improve provision for excluded children from the low levels in 2004/05.

Making a positive contribution

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. The JAR made no recommendations in relation to this outcome. The council's self-assessment indicates an awareness of areas where there is room for improvement, for example in the proportion of looked after children participating in the reviewing process. Increasing opportunities for children and young people to contribute their views on a wide range of issues are provided through the council's Youth Cabinet. A recent council analysis identified that looked after children absent from school are often actively engaged in offending behaviour. The council has recognised the urgent need to tackle absenteeism and offending of looked after children. In response to critical comments in the JAR regarding the lack of a coordinated anti-bullying policy the council has set up a working group to produce a coordinated policy for July 2006.

Achieving economic well-being

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. The joint area review highlighted one action to be taken immediately and two actions to be taken over the next six months.

Immediate

- Review the housing needs of young people across the borough and formulate a joint strategy and implementation plan to meet the needs of all young people.

Next six months

- Examine ways to ensure safe access to education and leisure services for all children and young people across the borough.
- Within the 14–19 strategy, strengthen collaboration between post-16 providers to ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups and those who find it difficult to access provision are more adequately met.

The council has made an appropriate response to these recommendations and an action plan is in place to enhance provision in addressing these issues. There have been a number

of positive developments to better meet the housing needs of young people. For example, homeless 16 and 17 year old care leavers are treated as a priority category and emergency accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds is now available. Shelter's review of services for young people in Trafford is contributing to the joint strategy and implementation plan to meet the needs of all young people, scheduled for completion by March 2007.

The local Learning Skills Council has commissioned an independent post-16 review to make recommendations regarding gaps and barriers in the current provision. The report is expected for the end of July 2006. Meanwhile the council has established a multi-agency task group to analyse and prepare a strategy for meeting the transport needs of children and young people in the borough. There is already increasing collaboration between schools and colleges to enhance both academic and vocational provision for post-16 learners. An enterprising project to support vulnerable young people from Year 11 throughout the summer holiday has a focus on overcoming barriers leading to September placements.

Service management

The contribution of council services to the overall management of services for children and young people is good. The JAR did not highlight any action required in this area. Data analysis and the council's self-assessment suggest that performance has remained consistent with the recent JAR findings.

The council has recognised that increased activity relating to safeguarding children and young people will place extra demands on its social care services resources. The council has produced a medium term financial plan that sets out the action the council will take in order to manage the predicted further increases in activity.

The council plans to provide:

- more family based support to reduce the numbers coming into care
- better procurement of agency foster care and out of borough placements for children with disabilities
- a contracts officer and a head of procurement
- additional foster carers through an enhanced marketing campaign.

Decisions regarding children and young people entering care are now taken at senior management level within the council.

The council has demonstrated good progress in the time available in meeting the JAR recommendations. It continues to demonstrate good capacity to further improve its services for children and young people.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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