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17 December 2008

Mr Kevan Collins
Corporate Director for Children's Services
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Town Hall
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London
E14 2BG

Dear Mr Collins

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets 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	4
Being healthy	4
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	4
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	4
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	4

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

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 4

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets consistently delivers outstanding services for children and young people. The council continues to improve upon its performance in most of the areas of its work and very good progress has been made in responding to the recommendations in the 2007 APA and the JAR report, published in July 2008. Safeguarding is good overall and the council makes an outstanding contribution to help children and young people keep healthy. The engagement of children and young people at all levels, including the most vulnerable, is a significant strength of the council's work. An example of this is the excellent contribution of a team of young people to the JAR.

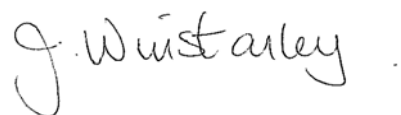
As endorsed by the JAR, service management is of a very high quality, leadership is excellent and the council demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve. Performance management is very effective. The council is highly ambitious for its children and young people. Excellent partnership work ensures a joined up, cohesive, multi-agency approach to service delivery. The determination to overcome considerable social and economic barriers, improve outcomes and reduce inequalities is shared by all with considerable success. A research based approach to evidence gathering and intelligent use of data ensures the council has excellent understanding of the needs of its community, thereby enabling it to deliver highly targeted, often innovative, support services. This is seen in the substantial reductions in number of young people who are not involved in education, employment and training and in the targeted support for looked after children which has resulted in excellent outcomes for them. Sustained improvements in educational outcomes for children and young people at all key stages is rapidly narrowing the gap between children in Tower Hamlets and those nationally. For example, from a very low base the rate of improvement in educational outcomes at Key Stage 4 is amongst the highest in the country.

The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development is consistent with the evidence. There are no additional recommendations to make as a result of the APA.

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".

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"> ▪ Very effective promotion of healthy lifestyles across a diverse community, achieving particular success with vulnerable, hard-to-reach groups. ▪ An extensive and flexible range of child and adolescent mental health services to promote children's health and well-being. ▪ Looked after children's health needs are robustly and effectively addressed through a comprehensive package of dedicated support. 	<p>Being healthy</p>
<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Excellent multi-agency approach to staying safe with a range of partnerships and pioneering work in faith and ethnic communities. ▪ Good overall performance on a wide range of key indicators. ▪ Clear and strong systems to share information and enable very good cross-agency working with vulnerable children. 	<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of initial and core assessments completed on time is significantly below national average.
<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standards continue to improve at a significantly faster rate than nationally. ▪ A very successful school improvement service has resulted in a high proportion of schools judged good or better in inspections. ▪ Excellent outcomes for vulnerable children, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. 	<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of students achieving five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics is below national average.
<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Innovative practices and a comprehensive young people's engagement strategy ensure very effective participation in decision making and in shaping service provision. ▪ Excellent opportunities for vulnerable young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to express their views and inform 	<p>Making a positive contribution</p>

<p>developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A high proportion of young people receive accreditation as a result of their involvement with the youth service. 	
<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 14–19 partnership is significantly improving curriculum provision, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. ▪ A substantial reduction in the number of young people, particularly the most vulnerable, who are not in education, employment or training, as a result of targeted, innovative approaches. ▪ Excellent support has maintained above average outcomes for looked after children on a wide range of indicators. 	<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications at aged 19 is below national average.
<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children’s services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ambitious targets and a very strong track record of improvement supported by effective partnership work and rigorous performance management. ▪ Excellent engagement of young people at strategic and operational levels, including in performance management. ▪ A strong focus on early intervention and preventative work which is consistently improving outcomes. 	<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children’s services</p>