

9 December 2009

Ms Isobel Cattermole
Interim Corporate Director for Children's Services
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Town Hall
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London
E14 0BG

Dear Ms Cattermole

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets perform excellently.

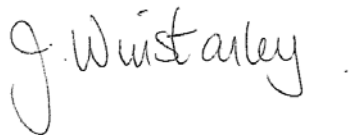
Specialist provision and services for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is almost all good or outstanding. Nearly half of the special schools in the borough and services for looked after children, including the local authority's fostering agency, are outstanding. The local authority's adoption agency and two children's homes are good and the 2008 joint area review judged safeguarding in the borough as good. Four serious case reviews have been undertaken in the period April 2007 to July 2009. Three of them have been conducted well and one adequately.

A higher than average proportion of nursery provision and primary schools is good or outstanding. Post-16 provision in the borough is good in all but one school sixth form, where it is adequate, as it is in the further educational college. The proportion of good secondary schools is broadly average, but two of the 15 schools are inadequate and less childcare and fewer childminders are good than found in similar areas or nationally. Childcare in Tower Hamlets does not do as well as similar areas in helping young people to feel safe. Childminders' good contribution to enjoying and achieving and making positive contribution outcomes is lower than found nationally.

Performance against a very large majority of indicators is in line with similar areas and national figures. The local authority does well in some areas of staying safe and enjoying and achieving, including reducing the proportion of children who become the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time and the relatively high test results for pupils aged 11 compared to similar areas. However, it performs less well in other national indicators: for example the timeliness of initial and core assessments of children in need, the relatively high levels of obesity among children aged five and 11 and the low achievement of pupils of White heritage aged 16. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and others of the same age is much smaller than in similar areas and across England as a whole. For example, pupils from lower income families and pupils identified as having special educational needs achieve well in test and examination results when they are aged 11 and 16 compared with similar areas and nationally.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

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, CAA