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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Ian Wilson  
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**1 November 2006**

Dear Ian Wilson

**2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

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 awarded <sup>1</sup>
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

<sup>1</sup>

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

## Being healthy

The council's children's services and children's social care services make an excellent contribution to improving the health of children and young people within the local authority. Systems for promoting children's health and development are effective. For example, the fostering service was commended for promoting children in its most recent inspection. Good quality partnerships between different agencies ensure that services are well integrated, resources used efficiently and that health provision is responsive to local needs. In order to ensure prompt and easy access to healthcare, nurses for children in the local authority care are located within social work teams.

Children and young people benefit substantially from the excellent provision. When compared to statistical neighbours and the national comparator, a significantly higher proportion of children and young people identified with substance-misuse needs is being assessed and provided with access to early intervention and treatment within 10 days. Child mortality rates have reduced over the past year. Children and young people have good access to a comprehensive mental health service as well as to a support for weight management. Conception rates amongst 15 to 17- year- olds have been reduced further. Children in local authority care have very good access to healthcare provision and those with disabilities have adequate access to respite care. The Healthy Schools Programme has been expanded and the authority is making good progress towards achieving the national target by December 2006.

## Staying safe

The contribution of the local authority's children's services and children's social care services to ensuring the safety of children and young people is outstanding. The authority responds effectively to some highly sensitive local issues and needs, for instance, by commissioning research and carrying out targeted work to protect the most vulnerable groups and individuals. There is a very strong emphasis on raising community awareness of safety and safeguarding issues such as domestic violence and forced marriages. This is facilitated by the effective partnerships and collaborative working with community agencies and faith groups. Specific multi-agency training is provided to staff working with Muslim, African and Somali families. The authority commissions an extensive range of support services and preventative work, such as the Children's Rights' Service which provides advocacy support and the Sanctuary Project run by the National Children's Homes which enables women and their families to stay in their homes safely in situations of domestic violence. The authority also ensures that there are safe recruitment procedures across all relevant agencies.

The inspection of the fostering and adoption services indicates that the authority provides an outstanding service. There is good support for birth families and others affected by adoption. The proportion of children in local authority care who are fostered by relatives or friends is significantly higher than that of its statistical neighbours, as is the proportion of children placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision being made to place them. The proportion of children adopted within the last 12 months (8.8%) is also high.

The authority has established a Local Safeguarding Board. There are appropriate protocols in place for establishing the identity and whereabouts of children and young people who are missing.

Outcomes for children and young people in this area are excellent overall. A very high proportion of initial assessments for children in need take place within 7 days of referral. Similarly, a high proportion (81%) of core assessments take place within 35 working days. As a result, children and young people have quicker access to social care services. All children on the Child Protection Register and those in local authority care have been allocated a qualified, social worker. Reviews for looked after children and those on the Child Protection Register are timely. More children's names have been removed from the Child Protection Register. However, the time spent on the register has increased within the last 12 months.

The number of children in local authority care who have experienced three or more placements during the year has not improved. The authority acknowledges that placement stability is an ongoing issue that presents a significant challenge and remains an area for improvement. There has been a reduction in the use of residential accommodation for children entering local authority care.

The school inspection outcomes indicate that children and young people adopt safe practices in schools. The authority actively encourages schools to take more responsibility for the safety of children and young people within the immediate locality of the school.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The council's services make an outstanding contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people in this area. Outcomes in this area are good. The authority ensures that the provision of childcare places reflects local needs; an example of this is the increase in the number of crèche places to meet the needs of mothers returning to education and employment. Training and moderation of the Foundation Stage profile has resulted in assessments that are more accurate and a clearer picture of attainment in the early years. As a result of targeted resources through the Early Years' Intensive Support Programme, the overall quality of early years' provision is mostly good.

Although standards overall are lower than the national average, they continue to improve across all key stages. In 2005, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was above that of statistical neighbours and in line with the national average in English and mathematics. At Key Stage 3, significant improvements in English brought the authority's attainment in line with its statistical neighbours. There were improvements in attainment also in mathematics and science. These remain in line with statistical neighbours but are well below the national average. Attainment in science is a relative weakness across all key stages but particularly in Key Stage 3. The authority exceeded its Key Stage 4 targets with improvements to the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE A\* to C grades. Attainment at this key stage is in line with statistical neighbours. The attainment of

children in local authority care is also good with the proportion attaining five or more A\* to C rising significantly and above that of statistical neighbours. However, the proportion of pupils achieving 1 or more A\* to G has fallen. The challenging targets and clear priorities outlined in the authority's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) reflect its commitment and determination to continue to improve standards.

Attendance in secondary schools is improving and in line with the national average. Although the authority has suitable strategies for promoting good attendance, attendance at primary level is below the national average and the level of unauthorised absence across both phases is high. Fixed-term exclusion rates are low and permanent exclusions are broadly in line with the national average. The authority provides full-time alternative education provision to all permanently excluded children.

The authority maintains a strong emphasis on inclusion and on reducing the number of statements of educational needs. It does this through a coordinated approach to identify and address needs and through a successful early-intervention strategy, for which it has gained beacon status. The authority has successfully reduced the proportion of statements to 2.6%, which is an improvement on last year, and the proportion of children with statements who have been successfully included in mainstream schools has risen by 4.3%. A significant proportion of statements of educational needs is issued within the required time scale of 18 weeks and a higher proportion is being issued to children under the age of five. The school inspection outcomes indicate that children with learning disabilities and difficulties make good progress in school. The fostering service excels in valuing diversity and promoting educational achievement.

School inspection evidence indicates that children and young people enjoy school. However, although the authority provides an extensive range of provision of recreational activities for young people, there is less evidence of the level of participation or the impact of these services.

The authority has appropriate data collection and analysis systems. Information from these is used effectively to monitor and improve standards. Support for school improvement is good and intervention strategies are effective in helping schools to raise standards. Support for schools causing concern is also good and as a result, the authority has fewer schools in this category than its statistical neighbours.

## **Making a positive contribution**

The council's services for children and young people make an excellent contribution to improving outcomes in this area. Its capacity to improve services in this area is enhanced by the collaborative work with a number of partners including the youth offending team, the Police and the voluntary sector. The authority's youth participation strategy is well developed. Opportunities for young people to have a say are provided through local youth partnerships and the Tower Hamlets Youth Partnership (THYP), which is represented on the Tower Hamlets Management Group and the Borough Policing Forum. The THYP collates pupils views from their participation in youth projects and these are reflected in the CYPP.

In response to the findings of last year's APA, the authority has taken appropriate action to improve young people's familiarity with the complaints' system. Improvements have been made to the capacity of the youth offending team to do more for victims of crime and restorative justice. The re-offending rate of those on community penalties has been reduced by 11% within the last year although there has been an increase in the number of offenders and offences with substantive outcomes. The authority has already begun to take action to reduce these. The rapid response team provides an important mediation service within neighbourhoods and is successful in promoting restorative justice.

Outcomes in this area are good overall. Children and young people have a range of opportunities to exercise duties within the Youth Parliament, with participation in the most recent elections being the third best in London. Inspection evidence indicates that children and young people's contribution to their communities is mostly very good. 300 young people have been trained as peer workers and mentors. The restorative work of the anti-social behaviour unit work has led to a 2.7% reduction in the first-time entrants to the criminal justice system within the last year. A high proportion of children in local authority care contribute to their own reviews. The Charter Mark inspection of the leaving care service in 2005 judged it to be outstanding. In order to improve its services and choice options, the authority is involving children and young people who have previously been in care in a satisfaction survey.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

The authority makes an excellent contribution to improving children and young people's economic well-being. It undertakes joint activities with the voluntary sector to maximise the income of families. There is a unified service for children with disabilities, and a single point of contact with adults' services, which ensures a smoother transition for children to the adults' service. There are close relationships between all post-16 education providers within the authority and the authority is currently undertaking a gap analysis for 2007 in order to ensure that a full range of diplomas will be offered under the new 14 to 19 framework.

Overall, outcomes in this area are satisfactory. Given the historical context of extremely high unemployment within the local authority, initiatives designed to help young people into work and reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training are largely successful. As a result, 62 more young people have been helped into employment or education within the last year. However, the authority rightly considers this as an area for further improvement and it has set a challenging target to reduce the proportion to 7% in 2008 from the current 12.3%.

Children and young people have increased access to careers advice and to housing. Personal advisors are available to all young people and financial assistance is available to those who require it. The percentage of children and young people known to the youth offending team who have moved from education to employment has increased by 26% over the last year to 90%. Children and young people with disabilities have better access

to a Connexions advisor. The vast majority of children in local authority care aged 16 and above have pathway plans and there are appropriate plans for other children and young people.

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

Overall, the management of the authority's services for children and young people is outstanding. The CYPP enunciates a clear strategic vision and reflects the issues identified through the authority's rigorous self-assessment procedures. It is focused on clear performance indicators and outcomes for pupils within a context of support and challenge. The plan is integrated, performance driven and its priorities are firmly rooted in a community planning process which involves all key stakeholders including children and young people.

The authority benefits from strong leadership, a committed and stable work force and a commitment to performance management. A director for children's services was recently appointed and effective arrangements have led to a smooth transition in leadership.

The authority's demonstrates excellent capacity to improve further. Corporate-planning processes are well supported by effective needs' analysis. The range of well established, award-winning services, practices and initiatives, such as the fostering service which was commended at the National Awards for Local Government in 2005, provide a strong platform for continued improvement. Financial planning is sound and effective collaboration across services ensures greater efficiency and better provision.

The authority remains committed to closely monitoring and improving performance. It has a well established, performance-management framework with clear links between strategic plans, service plans and individual performance. The Audit Commission identified as good practice the authority's use of benchmarking to review performance and to set challenging targets. The authority's track record of successful partnership with other agencies is a clear strength. However, systems for monitoring the performance of partner organisations are new. As a result, the authority does not yet have sufficient data on the effectiveness and impact of the services provided by these organisations. In time, the authority expects that its new commissioning contracts, which provide all partner organisations with a common set of performance indicators, will ensure that this aspect of its work improves.

## Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attention given to health needs of vulnerable children</li> <li>levels of teenage conception.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>none.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>child-protection systems</li> <li>sound and effective referral process.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>long-term stability of placements</li> <li>duration on the Child Protection Register.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increase in childcare provision</li> <li>attainment at Key Stage 2 and 4</li> <li>support for schools causing concern.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attainment at Key Stage 1 and 3</li> <li>attendance at primary schools</li> <li>reduction of unauthorised absences.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>practice for children and young people to give their views</li> <li>young people's participation strategy</li> <li>collaborative work with partner agencies</li> <li>focus on encouraging continuation in education or training</li> <li>leaving care service.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reduction in offenders and offences.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>access to careers' advice and housing</li> <li>post-16 opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>proportion of young people in education, employment or training.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strong leadership</li> <li>focus on performance management.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>systems for monitoring the performance of partner organisations to measure the effectiveness and impact of services provided by them for the council.</li> </ul>

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

### Being healthy

- None.

### Staying Safe

- Placement stability.
- Duration on Child Protection Register.

### Enjoying and achieving

- Attainment at Key Stage 1 and 3, particularly in science.

The effectiveness of strategies to improve the attendance in primary schools and reduce unauthorised absences.

### Making a positive contribution:

- Reduction in offenders and offences.

### Achieving economic well-being

- Effectiveness of strategies to reduce the proportion of children and young people not in education, employment or training.

### Service management

- Effectiveness of the authority's procedures for monitoring the performance and impact of commissioned 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's information only.

Yours sincerely



**FLO HADLEY**

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