

9 December 2010

Mr Victor Brownlees
Chief Executive and Acting Corporate Director for Children and Young People
Telford and Wrekin Council
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Dear Mr Brownlees

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment 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, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone, does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

Telford and Wrekin Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Telford and Wrekin Council perform well. Services have improved overall since 2009 when they performed adequately.

The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The large majority of early years settings are good. The pupil referral unit is good as is the local authority fostering service. There are no local authority children's homes. Provision in schools is more variable, with only just over half of primary schools and under half of secondary schools judged good or better in their most recent inspection. Two secondary schools are inadequate. Two of the four special schools are good and the remainder adequate. All provision for 16- to 18-year-olds is at least adequate, with outstanding provision in three of the four secondary school sixth forms and in the one special school sixth form. Provision in the larger further education college is good and that in the sixth form college satisfactory.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found some areas for development and no areas for priority action. Private fostering services are inadequate.

National performance measures show the large majority of outcomes are in line with the averages for England or for similar areas. Results in national tests show that children achieve broadly in line with similar areas at ages 11, 16 and 19. Levels of obesity for five-year-olds are above similar areas as are the number of children who report that they have been bullied. The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, training or work fell very slightly in 2009/2010 but remains above the average for similar areas.

Key areas for further development

- Increase the number of good and better primary and secondary schools.
- Continue to focus on reducing the number of young people not in education, training or work.

Outcomes for children and young people

Provision to support children and young people to live healthy lives is good in the very large majority of inspected services and settings. Most health outcomes for children and young people are in line with similar areas. The effectiveness of child and adolescent mental health services has continued to improve with more support for children and young people provided at early stages with better transition arrangements and reduced waiting times for specialist services. The number of children who are obese when they start school is above the average for England,

though obesity levels for children at age 11 are now in line with similar areas and national figures. This is a priority area of work for the local partnership. More children take part in physical education and sports activity than in similar areas of the country.

The very large majority of settings and services inspected are good or better in helping children stay safe and most indicators are in line with similar areas and the rest of the country. The joint area review of children's services in 2008 judged provision for safeguarding to be adequate overall. The recent inspection of front-line child protection services highlighted good joint working practices with other agencies such as the police and good plans to improve services. Areas identified for development included improving the quality of assessments and record-keeping, as well as some staffing capacity issues. Good progress continues to be made in reducing the number of road traffic accidents involving children under the age of 16.

Provision to help children to enjoy and achieve is good or better in the very large majority of inspected settings and services. Standards achieved at the end of the reception year have risen to be in line with those in similar areas. Educational standards by the ages of 11 and 16 are broadly similar to those nationally and have continued to rise for 16-year-olds to nearer the national average. However, the quality of primary and secondary schools is uneven, with a significant minority judged only adequate in inspection. The number of secondary schools which do not meet minimum standards has fallen over the last five years, though this is not the case for primary schools. The gap between the achievement of children from less advantaged backgrounds and with special educational needs and their peers, is wider than in other parts of the country in both primary and secondary schools. Standards of behaviour and persistent absence rates in secondary schools are in line with those in similar areas.

Children and young people have good opportunities to participate in service delivery, including groups whose circumstances have made them hard-to-reach or vulnerable. They are represented through the Children with Disabilities forum as well as the council youth forum and have contributed to the development of the accessibility strategy. Children in care are consulted on a wide range of issues. Teenage conceptions remain higher than the national average and this is a priority area for improvement for the local partnership. The three year Teenage Pregnancy Strategy prioritises actions and targets resources more effectively, with some early signs of positive impact. The rate of permanent exclusions from schools has fallen and is similar to national rates. The rate of re-offending by young people in Telford and Wrekin is lower than in similar areas and by most measures the Youth Offending Service works reasonably well.

Children and young people get good support from the very large majority of settings and services to do well in adult life. The number of young people gaining good qualifications by the age of 19 continues to rise and is slightly better than in similar areas. However, despite a slight improvement in 2009/2010, a significantly higher number of 16- to 18-year-olds do not continue into education, training or work than is the case in similar areas. These include some of the most vulnerable young people

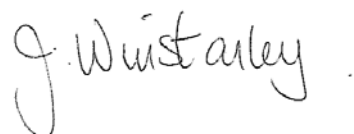
such as young parents. The partnership has set itself challenging targets to reduce these figures, but has yet to see sustained improvement.

Prospects for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people in Telford and Wrekin are continuing to improve, at broadly the same rate as similar areas. The local authority's Children and Young People's Plan demonstrates a good understanding of the areas for further work, through its five key priorities focused on the areas of greatest need. It is clear about what still needs to be done and has set challenging targets for improvement. Action to support inadequate schools is now generally effective. Improvement plans are in place to tackle the high teenage conception rate and the continuing high numbers of young people not in education, employment or work.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment