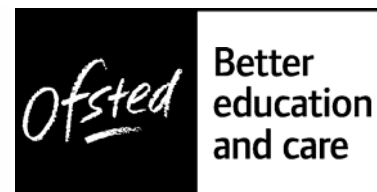


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
Email edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Making Social Care
Better for People



Ms Christine Davies
Director of Children & Young People
Telford and Wrekin Council
Civic Offices
Malinslee
Telford
TF3 4WF

1 December 2005

Dear Ms Davies

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF TELFORD AND WREKIN COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 20 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your 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.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory overall with some clear strengths. The Council has conducted an assessment of the health risks to children and young people, whilst drafting the first Children and Young People's Plan, though this does not yet include an analysis of the specific health needs of Black and ethnic minority children in Telford. There is good or very good provision for involvement of children in sport in schools in Telford.

Pre-school children are well served, and all children who want a place in nursery education are able to have one. There has been a fall in numbers of child-minders and part-time day care facilities, but overall numbers of places have increased slightly.

Telford has had higher than average numbers of teenage conceptions and targets for reducing these remain challenging. The Council is confident that recent data shows a downward trend such that 2010 targets will be met.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are delivered through a multi-agency team, managed by Telford Primary Care Trust, on behalf of both Telford and Shropshire Councils. The team has been enhanced by the addition of Primary Mental Health workers who will link into the five school clusters, however the Council recognises that further development is necessary before a comprehensive service is available.

Health monitoring of looked after children has been less effective than last year but is still better than the national average. The effectiveness of action taken to promote the health of children and young people who are looked after is inconsistent and there is evidence that monitoring information is not always used to develop appropriate plans for individual children that are available to carers.

Staying safe

Although outcomes are satisfactory overall there are some important weaknesses. Safety for all children has been improved by adoption of a multi-agency approach to children in need, based around five school clusters, and the Council has recently been awarded Beacon status because of its approach to integrated front line services for children. The Council has also been involved in the IRT/ISA pilot project, and believes that the rise in referrals of children in need that lead to initial assessment is attributable to the pilot project raising awareness among child-care workers. Outcomes for children in need have been enhanced by a very significant improvement in conducting initial assessments quickly. There has also been an improvement in timely completion of core assessments, and performance on timely assessment is better than comparable authorities. The number of core assessments per head of population has increased but remains low against comparable councils. The Council's view is that early intervention at tier 1 and 2 has reduced the need for full core assessments.

There has been an increase in the number of children on the child protection register. The proportion of children on the child protection register who were reviewed within time scales improved. However, the Council reported a rise in the proportion of children not allocated to a social worker compared with the previous year, and the proportion of children without a social worker on 31st March 2005 was high. The Council states that this is caused by accurate reporting of delays in reallocation following transfer of child protection cases between teams, and that there are effective procedures in place to ensure that such children are visited and monitored

Pupils' care, welfare and safety were judged to be satisfactory or good in all of the schools inspected, and they all had child protection procedures in place.

There has been progress in increasing the proportion of looked after children who benefit from a permanent family through adoption.

There are weaknesses in ensuring that looked after children have safe and stable placements. The council has reduced the proportion of children who have three or more placements however performance is in the poorest quartile compared with other councils. Long-term placement stability has declined slightly and is below average. It is nonetheless to the Council's credit that, given the budget pressures on the Council, placement stability has not been significantly worsened. The base budget for looked after children has been increased for the second successive year. The proportion of

looked after children with an allocated qualified social worker fell and is well below the England average. The Council has been granted flexibility within the recently negotiated Local Area Agreement to use other professions as the named worker for looked after children. The authority reports that 50% of files have been audited, but inspections show there are weaknesses in care planning and risk assessment for some looked after children.

Placement resources are not adequate to meet the needs of children who are looked after, and a high proportion of the authority's looked after children are placed in residential care. The authority's own residential care resources do not consistently meet national minimum standards, and required improvements have not always been implemented from one inspection to the next. The aims and objectives of homes have been reviewed and the most recent inspection reports show evidence of progress. There have been occasions where the authority has placed children in its homes outside the terms of registration, because of a shortage of suitable placements. Inspection of the fostering service casts doubt on whether it has the capacity to recruit and adequately support foster carers who can meet the more demanding needs of an older and more challenging group of looked after children. Not all foster carer reviews had been completed. The authority has not yet produced a comprehensive strategy that will deliver the necessary improvements in outcomes for children looked after. The authority reports this strategy is under development.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory overall. Much of the educational provision is good and some is very good but there are key areas for development. The achievement of children at the end of Key Stage 1 is good overall and very good in writing and mathematics. At Key Stage 3 the achievement of pupils is in line with national averages. At Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils gaining some qualification is above national average and this shows improvement over time. The pupils' achievement at Key Stage 2 is a concern; the progress the pupils make between Key Stage 1 and 2 is unsatisfactory; test results at the end of Key Stage 2 are below the national average and, although the English results have shown a slight improvement, results in all three core subjects are below those expected. A suitable range of strategies are being implemented across the authority to remedy this concern. There is little reference in the plan to the identification of individual pupils who are underperforming or the intervention strategies which are to be used to bring about improvement.

Primary and secondary school inspections showed educational provision to be never less than satisfactory and many aspects were good or very good. Full time nursery provision was judged to be good or very good although over one fifth of all part time nursery settings were judged to have weaknesses in communication and the quality of

teaching. Two schools which have previously been in a national category of concern have now been removed from this category.

School attendance is in line with national averages. The attendance of looked after children has improved significantly although the attainment of this group of pupils requires further improvement. There is insufficient focus in the plan to how achievement of educationally disadvantaged groups such as those pupils with special educational needs or children with a disability can be improved and there is no reference to any detailed work on the relative achievement of boys and girls.

The number of fixed term exclusions has risen. The authority is concerned that there may be an increase in 'informal exclusions', and is investigating this. Provision for pregnant school girls is satisfactory but the provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded from school remains an area for further work.

There is a suitable range of recreational activities for pupils out of school hours and currently there are proposals to increase this provision.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in the area are satisfactory overall and with a number of features which are good. Children and young people are generally well supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives. School inspections show that social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is satisfactory or better in all schools and nursery day care settings; none of the inspection reports identified bullying as an issue in schools and there are in place a number of initiatives which have the potential for children's view to shape the development of council services.

There is good provision for children to participate in decision making within the community. All secondary schools have a school council; more than five and half thousand young people have been involved in consultation, including consultation about the re-commissioned service for young carers, the young people's forum and training for involvement in the recruitment and selection of staff. There are a few good examples of this consultation being used to inform the authority's overall strategies but the full impact of this extensive consultation has yet to be realised.

Action has been taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people who are looked after and this has led to a reduction in offending by this group. There is a need to increase the proportion of looked after children who contribute to their own reviews.

Staffing difficulties within the Youth Justice team has limited the availability of up to date and evaluative reports although the most recent quarterly review shows that most of the performance indicators in this area have been achieved.

Achieving economic well-being

The outcomes in this area are broadly satisfactory overall with some significant weaknesses. The proportion of young people who are staying on in full time education at the age of sixteen has increased and this is good. The number of pupils who are not in education, employment or training after the age of sixteen has fallen significantly and this includes the group of young people who are leaving care. This is also good.

The Local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) has produced a comprehensive plan for the education and training of pupils from the age of 16; the plan covers 2003 to 2006 and records a range of appropriate strategies to improve the provision for this age group. The LLSC has also produced a document outlining plans for developments for 2005-6. Although some milestones are outlined in the LLSC plans there is little evidence that the authority has reviewed and evaluated the impact of these activities. There is a paucity of information on the retention, achievement or progression of these young people. There is little evidence of a suitable range of vocational progression routes for pupils at 16 and the most recent review of the curriculum provision for pupils from the age of 14 was in 2002 and is therefore out of date. The plans for increased flexibility at Key Stage 4, the introduction of a range of suitable vocational and work related learning activities and better co-ordination of transition were well founded but there is no up to date information about current provision or achievement.

The performance on the production of pathway plans for eligible and relevant children was, until very recently, well below the national average. New structures for transition planning for children with disabilities aim to improve the outcomes for this vulnerable group.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<p><i>Being healthy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and young people, including participation in sport at primary level. 	<p><i>Being healthy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> early intervention and improved access to services for children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties.
<p><i>Staying safe</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduction of delays in completing assessments, particularly initial assessments. 	<p><i>Staying safe</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of planning and support for individual children the availability of adequate good quality foster homes and residential placements for looked after children.

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> educational provision overall is good key Stage 1 results are good attendance of looked after children has improved. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> achievement at Key Stage 2 fixed term and informal exclusions systematic tracking of individual pupils and implementation of suitable intervention strategies for underperformance focus on educationally disadvantaged groups.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMSC in school and nursery inspections the reduction in offending by under 16s the good range of systems for consultation with children and young people. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engagement of LAC in their own reviews review and evaluation of youth justice data.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved staying on rates post 16 reduction in NEET for all children including those looked after. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transition planning with adult social services for children with a learning disability implementation, development and evaluation of education and training 14 to 19 analysis of performance, retention and progression routes post 16 flexible curriculum, work related learning and progression routes 14-19.

Service management

The authority has a well-developed Children and Young People's Partnership, which has achieved a high degree of commitment from partners. The authority is making good progress in implementing the requirements of the Children Act to produce a single children and young people's plan from 2006. Sub-groups of the partnership have completed a thorough needs analysis, and the Partnership has recently published the Children's Services Plan for Telford. This includes a set of clear, appropriate priorities for development focused on improving the outcomes for children and young people. The authority's view is that early publication of the Plan will allow for this to be fine tuned in time for the required implementation date in April 2006.

The authority has contributed to a number of pilot programmes including the pathfinder Children's Trust programme and the Information Referral and Tracking project. It has been awarded Beacon status for provision of integrated children's services.

The authority has a clear understanding of its strengths, which are reflected in the self-assessment. The self-assessment did not demonstrate a complete understanding of areas of weakness, by recognising, for example, the need to improve in house residential care or to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve outcomes for children looked after. Performance management systems are a strength in the authority, and difficulties experienced with new client database systems in social care have been minimised with regard to children's services. Partnership and multi-agency working is well-established and co-ordinated at a strategic level. The authority has established joint commissioning arrangements for delivering services for children. The handover of responsibility to the incoming Director of Children's Services has been affected without disruption to services, and with the support of staff.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health:

- early intervention and improved access to services for children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties.

Staying safe

Looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:

- care planning and risk assessment
- the capacity to provide for the needs of all looked after children.

Enjoying and achieving

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:

- the educational attainment of looked after children.

Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:

Educational provision is made for children who do not attend school:

- fixed term and informal exclusions.

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- standards and achievement at Key Stage 2
- pupil tracking and intervention for underperformance.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make a positive contribution:

- the use of the views of children and young people (including those with disabilities) to inform and make a difference to local authority strategies.

Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:

- youth justice information.

Achieving economic well-being

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve economic well-being:

- transition planning in partnership with adult social services for children with a learning disability.

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- curriculum provision 14 to 16
- provision, retention, achievement and progression 14 to 19.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



Flo Hadley

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



Jonathan Phillips

Director – Quality, Performance and
Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Telford and Wrekin Council

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

1

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate