

26 November 2007

Mr Ian Smith
Executive Director for Services for Children and Young People
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
Council Offices
Wellington Road
Ashton-under-Lyne
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Dear Mr Smith

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN TAMESIDE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council provides good services for children and young people in an area with high levels of social disadvantage. The quality of provision makes a notable difference to their lives. Many outcomes in the five *Every child matters* areas are better than in other similar local authorities and the remaining areas are improving year on year. Children and young people are regularly consulted and contribute widely to planning. Likewise, collaborative multi-agency working is a core strength, and working relationships between the council and its many partners, particularly schools and the local business community, are extremely positive. Capacity is judged to be good. There is a strong track record of improvement in most outcomes which is linked closely to visionary strategy, reflective planning and high quality service delivery.

Being healthy

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council continues to work collaboratively with its

partners to promote the healthy lifestyles of all children and young people. This partnership has been enriched by the recent jointly funded appointment of a strategic lead for children within the Primary Care Trust. The provision of preventative and early intervention services with other partners to support smoking cessation, breast-feeding and immunisation have resulted in improved performance in all these areas. However, the figures for decayed, missing and filled teeth remain significantly higher than the national average. The council is now developing a more targeted approach to improving the oral health of children and young people.

Participation in sport is higher than the national average and that of comparable councils, and the majority of pupils in schools receive a minimum of two hours of high quality physical education and school sports each week. An increased number of schools are participating in the Healthy Schools Programme and the level of involvement by Tameside's schools is now above the national target. Fitness club schemes to tackle obesity and promote healthy eating have been established for parents and children, alongside an obesity care pathway planning process for children identified as having an obesity problem.

Health promotion is targeted effectively at vulnerable groups of children. The proportion of children and young people looked after by the authority who have regular health assessments and dental treatment is very good, and the proportion is increasingly above that of comparator areas and national figures. The recent fostering inspection judged the quality of healthcare to be good for children in foster care. More than 150 disabled learners have taken part in high quality physical education and sport, and this has now led to the formation of the disability sports club.

The rate of teenage conception has remained high and the overall trend is still upward. Following a visit from the national support team in June the council is implementing a range of new interventions to try to reduce these numbers, including appointing a senior manager to lead this work. However, the impact of these initiatives is yet to be felt and the government's target for reduction is unlikely to be reached.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service is improved, particularly in relation to the delivery of services to 16–17 year olds, and to young people with urgent mental health needs. However, the rate of progress toward a comprehensive CAMHS is slightly below the national average and has at this point only demonstrated band 2 for development of protocols for partnership working for children and young people with complex and persistent and severe behavioural and mental health needs. Beds are now available specifically for young people with mental health needs so that age-appropriate services can be offered. The service is shortly to be co-located with the youth offending team, leaving care team, Connexions, and the drug and alcohol team. The youth offending team has consistently performed better than comparators in assessing young people with mental health needs and for substance misuse within timescales. More young people were also offered treatment within appropriate timescales.

Area(s) for development

- Reverse the upward trend in teenage conception rates.
- Reduce the number of children with decayed, filled or missing teeth.

Staying safe

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Safeguarding arrangements have continued to improve in the last 12 months, and significantly in respect of the areas identified for improvement in the APA of 2006. Most schools were good or better at ensuring that learners adopted safe practices in school, and effective road safety schemes have reduced the number of children killed or seriously injured on the roads from 27 in 2004 to 20 in 2006.

Inspection actions around safety and child protection imposed at registration of early years settings have been higher than average. Although the council has introduced more rigorous training, the impact of this has not yet been realised.

Good performance has been sustained in the area of child protection with some significant improvements. The numbers of both initial and core assessments completed within timescales have consistently risen since 2003 to well above national and comparator authorities. Low numbers of children have been registered due to effective multi-agency early intervention and robust monitoring of safeguarding arrangements; few children stay on the register for more than two years. All children on the register have a named social worker and all have their cases reviewed within timescales. A high number of social workers are trained to post qualifying level and this is better than comparator and national averages.

The number of looked after children and young people has risen slightly from last year and is just above that of comparator authorities. There has been an increase in the numbers of young people remaining in care who finish education or training schemes. Looked after children and young people have secure and stable placements in the short term, and long-term placement stability is better than in similar areas. Most looked after children aged 10 to 16 years live in foster care or adoptive placements and a high proportion of care leavers live in suitable accommodation. The numbers of children adopted within 12 months is very good and the recent adoption inspection found systems in place to safeguard the needs of children and promote the making of safe placements.

All care leavers have pathway plans in place and personal advisers. The numbers of looked after children and young people placed outside of the borough in residential care has been reduced by half in the last year, and monitoring arrangements for safeguarding those that remain outside of the borough have been improved.

Area(s) for development

- Reduce the numbers of actions imposed for safety and child protection at the registration stage of child care settings.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Most groups of children and young people achieve well overall. From low starting points, children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage, reaching levels that are higher than the national expectations for their age. At Key Stage 1, progress is slower, although improvements were made in 2006 when results showed a narrowing of the gap, bringing them more closely in line with other similar councils and the national picture. However, the pace of change is still not rapid enough. At Key Stage 2, value added measures have risen steadily over time and overall long-term improvement is above the national trend. The proportion of pupils at Level 5 or above at Key Stage 2 has improved in English from 25% in 2005 to 29% in 2006 and in mathematics from 28% to 33%. In 2006, results overall were in line with other similar areas and with those nationally. In science they were much higher, having risen for the third consecutive year. Science is not as strong at Key Stage 3, where results in 2006 were below the national average. However, the trend has been upward for three years and the gap is closing. Likewise, results in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 are rising consistently year on year. English has particularly improved and is now higher than in other similar councils. Value added measures overall for 2006 were in line with those nationally. Progress is faster during Key Stage 4, and GCSE results are improving. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE A* to C (including English & mathematics) went up in 2006, bringing Tameside in line with statistical neighbours. Results for GCSE A* to C (not including English and mathematics) fell by 1.79% in 2006. In rapid response, the school improvement team put in place a programme of intensive support for the schools performing least well. As a result of this, results went up by 5.44% in 2007 and the gap narrowed considerably. All schools reached or exceeded their floor targets, an improvement on the picture in 2006.

An extensive range of additional and targeted provision is directed towards vulnerable groups. In particular previously disaffected young people are becoming increasingly engaged with learning. Black and minority ethnic groups are supported well. In the Foundation Stage, children of Indian heritage exceed all other groups. At Key Stages 1 and 2 Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage pupils have been gradually catching up with all other pupils since 2003, although in 2006 the gap widened again for Bangladeshi heritage pupils. By the end of Key Stage 4 young people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage achieve GCSE results that are higher than for all groups. Looked after children and young people achieve significantly better than nationally, and the gap is closing between their achievement and the average for all children and young people in Tameside. The work of the pupil referral units and special schools is of particularly high quality.

Intervention by the school improvement team is proportionate to performance, and the intensive support during the last year in the most underperforming high schools, including those in Ofsted categories of concern, has had a positive impact. However, inspection reports reveal a low number of schools that are outstanding within the borough, and a larger percentage of satisfactory schools than seen in similar councils.

The exchange of information between agencies improves every year as systems are further refined to improve communication. Good use is made of performance data. Joint planning has been further integrated with the introduction of the outcomes sub-groups. The council has done much work to reduce the number of exclusions and numbers have fallen for the last two years. Attendance is in line with the national averages. Support for parents is provided through the four area teams and the multi-agency steering group is quick to address on-going needs such as developing a new advice line.

The Play Strategy for Tameside has just been launched to improve opportunities and facilities for all children and young people from 0–19. Other more well-established projects such as St Peters Youth (SPY) are already improving life chances through activities such as mountaineering and drama. Enthusiastic feedback from the young people is testimony to the impact this is having on self-esteem, motivation and behaviour.

Area(s) for development

- Increase the rates of progress at Key Stage 1.
- Help more schools to achieve outstanding and good inspection judgements.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. There is a strong culture of participation within the council and the use of a participation network ensures that there is effective contact with more vulnerable groups. Most schools have school councils and each of the eight district assemblies have youth representatives who attend the meetings. Young people have been involved in recruiting staff and training foster carers, headteachers and governors.

There has been a significant improvement in targeting participation by minority ethnic groups. For example, one group of minority ethnic young people were supported to work as volunteers with the youth service. They have progressed to take NVQs and are now paid employees. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been supported to become volunteers through the youth service disability group.

Young people have been consulted on a wide range of issues over the past 12 months including the play strategy, child health provision, and design of parks. Young carers and looked after children are consulted on specific matters that particularly concern them. The council plans to develop its approach to consultation to ensure that even more children have a regular opportunity to be involved. All looked after young people communicated their views at their statutory reviews, higher than the averages nationally and in similar areas.

An increased number of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a transition plan and this has been a focus for the council this year. A full-time transitions officer has been appointed and attends all Year 9 reviews of children in special schools, with a worker from the adult care service. The children are involved in developing their person-centred plan to help ensure their needs are met as they move into adulthood.

The council has increased significantly since 2005 the number of young people reached by publicly funded youth services to 60%. This is above the national target of 25% and represents 12,900 young people.

There was a reduction in the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system between April and December 2006 bringing the figure to better than average. This is in spite of a 29% increase in offences brought to justice. Re-offending rates have also dropped to below national averages. The number of final warnings and reprimands has decreased from last year and is better than other similar authorities.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Improvements are evident year on year, and the council is continuously seeking to ensure that children and young people receive the very best preparation for their economic futures. Strategic planning includes extensive and high quality partnerships with other agencies, businesses and local communities. This results in effective provision across the age range, from the supply of book packs to newborn babies and toddlers, which exceeds national provision by 12%, to the rapidly increasing recruitment levels reached in colleges which broke past records this year (79%).

There is a good choice of child care provision. Multi-agency services are well coordinated through four area cluster groups. This results in close integration between the private, voluntary and independent sector provision and maintained nurseries and schools within each locality. The number of children aged 0–4 with access to children's centre services has increased year on year and the proportion of children from the most disadvantaged families gaining access to these services has increased accordingly. The positive impact of this well-supported provision in the early stages of children's lives is evidenced by the good progress that children make during the early years, taking them from low starting points to above national

expectations by the end of the Foundation Stage. Vulnerable groups of children are targeted for intervention at a very early stage. Inspection judgements deemed no private, voluntary or independent settings to be unsatisfactory, but the percentage of settings judged to be outstanding was lower than nationally.

The comprehensive 14–19 Action Plan is based on thorough identification of educational and economic needs. Systematic monitoring ensures that the strategy is progressing effectively and on-going implementation is responsive to changing needs. Progress since last year has been rapid. For example, the further expansion of apprenticeship schemes has led to a dramatic 140% rise in completion of apprenticeships during the last year. The introduction of the new vocational diplomas has been carefully planned to meet local economic needs, building on current expertise and complementing existing courses. Partnerships with businesses have continued to go from strength to strength, in particular the consultation on work skills required by employers now and in the future.

As a result of this well-planned provision, the performance of young people is improving year on year. All groups of learners are carefully monitored to ensure equity and inclusion. Outcomes are particularly good for looked after children and young people. The performance of Bangladeshi heritage pupils at GCSE level is higher than the overall average for the authority. Results for learners in sixth forms, already a strength in the authority, improved even further in 2006 and average point scores moved to well above those in similar areas and nationally. More learners in Tameside reach Level 2 than in similar areas and nationally, following post-16 education and training in other settings. However, fewer reached Level 3. There has been a steady reduction in numbers of young people not in education, employment or training for three years, falling from 9.18% in 2005 to 2.70% in 2007.

Area(s) for development

- Increase the proportion of outstanding early years settings.
- Increase the percentage of young people achieving Level 3 by age 19.

Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services **Grade 3**

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's capacity for improvement is good. There are some outstanding features such as the significant progress during the Foundation Stage, the well-being and achievement of looked after children, and the varied provision for 14–19 year olds that has led to a considerable increase in staying on rates. Improvements such as these have been achieved through innovative strategic planning, prudent financial management and strong leadership. However, the implementation and impact of recent initiatives have yet to be felt in certain areas; for example, the rate of progress for pupils at Key Stage 1. Similarly, the council and its partners have been

unsuccessful in addressing the longstanding and above average teenage conception rate.

The leadership team is highly active, effective and visible at all levels, including in schools. As a result, there are high levels of confidence as evidenced by the exceptionally high survey returns (76%) from the national schools survey. The numerous innovative approaches to delivery of services and solving problems have, in some cases, been followed by other local authorities and recognised nationally, for example the approach to funding the new academies and the Children and Young People's Workforce Mapping exercise. The service is led by a strong Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and there is tight multi-agency linkage between all the strategy groups that feed into this. Improvements to services are made according to the identification of need because the leadership team is reflective and proactive. This includes continuous improvements to the organisational structure. For example, the integration of *Every child matters* outcomes sub-groups in September 2006 has further improved communications, accountability and the monitoring of outcomes. Likewise, the local area service delivery model (across four geographical areas) is collaborative and effective. As a result, improvements to outcomes for many children and young people year on year are consistent and sustained. The council's commitment to meeting their needs is exemplary, and provision is proportionate to needs resulting in accelerated improvements for many vulnerable groups. Consultations with young people are extensive and are carried out with a wide variety of groups according to purpose. However, the council has much further work still to do to improve the quality of those schools that are graded satisfactory to good, and those graded good to outstanding.

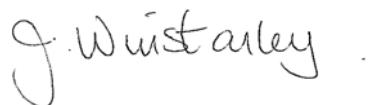
Self-evaluation is extensive and performance information is used widely to identify priorities. The outcomes sub-groups now have an effective report card system for feeding back more systematically on the *Every child matters* areas and the review of the Children and Young People's Plan was thorough and evaluative. However, analysis of outcomes data over time is not always available in formats that present a simpler overview of the big picture. The workforce development strategy ensures that there are sufficient skills in place and the extensive mapping exercise referred to earlier will ensure that new types of posts are created in a timely way to cater for demand. Financial management is strong. Prudent decisions are made, targeting resources based on need. Strategic solutions such as jointly-funded posts and vacancy savings ensure that funding is efficient and secure. Improvements are achieved despite the fact that the budget is well below that of other similar councils. The council thus provides very good value for money.

Area(s) for development

- Clarify the presentation of trends over time to make them more accessible for a wider range of audiences.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection