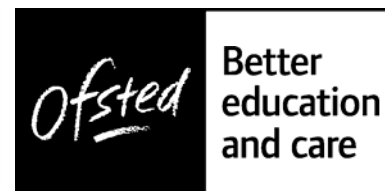


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Mr Ian Smith - Executive Director Lifelong Learning
Ms Annie Dodd - Head of Children & Families
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
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1 December 2005

Dear Mr Smith

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF TAMESIDE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 6 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 you and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are good and are assisted by strong partnership activity. A number of innovative schemes in schools have won national recognition and brought the council praise from government ministers. A clear commitment to the healthy schools programme exists and levels of involvement in sport in schools are high. Particularly pleasing is the progress made in promoting the health of looked after children, which is now good, together with improved staffing in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

The council recognises that it still has improvements to make in this outcome area, particularly in relation to the incidence rates of teenage pregnancy, which are increasing, though the council has an effective strategy for improvement in this regard. Whilst improvements to CAMHS staffing is positive, it has yet to demonstrate improved outcomes for young people and a focus on the needs of those aged 16 to 17 will be particularly important in the future. Further work is needed to ensure appropriate attention is given to the needs of black and minority ethnic children.

Staying safe

Performance in this area is satisfactory with some aspects showing considerable improvement whilst others require more attention. Improvements in the timeliness of initial and core assessments of children and families are positive although the council acknowledges that further improvement is required in order to achieve the levels of comparator authorities. The number of looked after children rose last year and the reasons for this need to be carefully monitored.

Child protection procedures are comprehensively in place in schools and are monitored for their effectiveness regularly by the council. The number of children registered and re-registered on the child protection register has fallen but black and minority ethnic children are over-represented. Generally this is a positive indicator; but the council needs to develop local performance targets to ensure that those children requiring protection are receiving it.

The council's performance on the adoption of looked after children is good; children are placed for adoption in a timely manner. The number of children looked after by the council continues to be high. Whilst some progress has been made in reducing the numbers of looked after children, further improvement is required, in particular in reducing the number of children subject to care orders living with parents. The number of looked after children allocated to a qualified social worker is currently too low.

Generally the stability of children's placements remains good, although indicators signify this may be changing. The situation needs to be monitored carefully and action taken as necessary.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are good overall although there are some areas of weakness. The quality of early years provision is a strength overall. School standards are satisfactory, indicate an improving trend and are in line with statistical neighbours. Weaknesses exist particularly in aspects of attainment at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3, for example, a decline in writing standards at Key Stage 1 and low attainment in English at Key Stage 3. Overall, young people achieve in line with statistical neighbours but below national averages. The value added to young people's attainment between Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. Floor targets for 2004 have been met and the council is well on the way to achieving its targets for 2006 and 2008. New arrangements to monitor, challenge, support and intervene in schools are proving successful with two of three schools recently being removed from the special measures category.

The Tameside entitlement curriculum ensures all young people have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Positive support and provision are given to young people with special educational needs and statements with almost all gaining at least an entry level qualification at the end of Key Stage 4. Although there is good improvement in the attainment of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage young people, the council acknowledges the need for further investment particularly in respect of Bangladeshi boys. The attainment of looked after children is a cause for concern despite the work of a dedicated steering group and support of the educational resources team.

Good progress has been made to improve attendance and manage behaviour overall. However, the attendance of looked after children is unsatisfactory. The promising declining trend in school exclusions has been reversed in secondary schools in the past year. The improvement in out-of-school provision for excluded pupils masks low levels of re-integration. No young people with statements of SEN have been excluded from school in the last year.

Partnership activity is a strength. Supported by the SureStart quality team, there is a good integrated approach to education zero to five. The police and Primary Care Trust contribute to identifying young people at risk. Improving participation rates in education at post-16 are supported by good progress overall in reducing the numbers of young people not in education, training and employment including for those known to the local Youth Offending Team (YOT).

Whilst the LEA is managing well the excess places in secondary schools there are significant numbers of primary schools with more than a quarter of surplus places.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. The engagement of young people is a strength with significant numbers of young people involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of services. This work has been recognised in the council's 'Getting Closer to the Community' activity that was awarded beacon status. For example, regeneration area activities engage young people in local decision-making and they are consulted about a range of council-led initiatives. In 2004, the council conducted over 20 formal pieces of consultation with young people separate from school councils and local youth forums. The Tameside youth forum encourages disabled young people's voices to be heard. Some 83% of looked after children contribute to their statutory reviews. This is an acceptable level and a considerable improvement on previous performance but there is still scope for further improvement. A group of looked after children have provided 'Total Respect' training for managers, carers and councillors following their involvement in the review of looked after children services. All young people with statements of special educational needs are consulted about their education through the review process. However, the council recognises that more needs to be done to

increase its levels of engagement with young people from black and minority ethnic communities.

The council has exceeded the Youth Justice Board national target of 90% of young offenders in education, employment or training – one of few councils in the country to do so. Levels of youth offending and recidivism have fallen but there has been limited progress in reducing the numbers of looked after children involved with the youth justice system.

Achieving economic well-being

This is a positive area of the council’s work with good overall outcomes and examples of good progress. The effect on young people of the work of the 14 to 19 strategic partnership is meeting with some success after a slow start. Sixth form attainment is significantly better than statistical neighbours and the national average. Whilst it remains a challenge to encourage young people to remain in education and training beyond the age of 16, there is continuing increased participation. Almost all care leavers have a pathway plan and all are allocated a Connexions personal adviser. Following its initial success, the council is extending the number of modern apprenticeships it offers care leavers which sets an example to other local employers. The proportion of care leavers who are in education, employment or training, however, is almost half the national target and none have progressed to higher education and improvements are needed. Effective partnerships are helping to create local employment opportunities especially for young people with a disability. However, the number of carers of disabled children in receipt of direct payments is half that of comparator authorities and only 20% of the national average.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved outcomes for the health of looked after children • improved CAMHS • strong partnerships • nationally recognised innovative practice to support health in schools. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the rates of teenage pregnancy • further development in CAMHS • further improvement in health of looked after children.

<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduced numbers on the child protection register • effective cross-agency consultation with young people. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the number of looked after children • reduce the number of looked after children placed at home under placement with parents regulations.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tameside entitlement curriculum • good childcare and nursery education • good special educational needs performance and quality of provision • good quality and use of data • increasing effectiveness of school monitoring, challenge, support and intervention strategies. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attainment in English at Key Stage 3 • attainment and attendance of looked after children • attainment of Bangladeshi boys • levels of re-integration of excluded pupils.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reductions in re-offending • high numbers of young offenders in education, employment and training • good contributions to local community activity • good involvement of young people in helping to shape their services. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited ambition regarding lowering looked after children offending rates.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance of sixth form students in schools • improving participation in education by young people post-16 • reductions in the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proportion of care leavers in education, employment and training • levels of direct payments to carers of children in need with disabilities.

Service management

The council is strongly committed to improving its services for children and young people. Strong management structures with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and effective partnerships are strengths of the council. The good involvement of young people and effective budget management provide reasons to be optimistic about the council's future responses to the agenda set by Every Child Matters. Comprehensive needs analyses underpin well-considered strategic and operational plans for education and children's social care.

Many of the plans, however, are relatively new and their potential has yet to be translated into better outcomes for all young people especially within the diverse black and minority ethnic communities and for other vulnerable groups.

A comprehensive and effective performance management structure is in place. Together with the good use of data, performance management is enabling improvements in the quality of children's social care and education. Although good progress has been made during and since the transition to a directorate of services for children and young people, overall it is a slowly improving picture and there is a need for the pace of change and improvement to quicken.

Whilst the council has focused on developing effective processes and showcasing individual activities, it has not always garnered outcomes effectively to demonstrate what is being done well and identify the areas for improvement, especially those for vulnerable and priority groups.

The council's capacity to improve further is good.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people:

- action is taken to halt the rise in teenage pregnancies and to reduce them.

Staying safe

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

- reduce the numbers of looked after children
- improve the allocation of qualified social workers to looked after children.

Enjoying and achieving

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

- further action to improve the performance of boys and especially of Bangladeshi boys
- develop and extend current arrangements to enable higher levels of attainment for looked after children and young people from other vulnerable groups.

Achieving economic well-being

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:

- increase young people's access to vocational education at Key Stage 4
- improve action to raise the levels of successful participation in education at post-16.

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: Tameside Metropolitan Borough 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