



Making Social Care  
Better for People



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**9 March 2006**

Dear Colleagues

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (APA) OF LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the meeting held on 28 July 2005 to discuss the council's response to the pilot Joint Area Review (JAR) recommendations for education and social care services within your authority and the subsequent review in October 2005. The provisional judgements for the annual performance assessment 2005 reflect the outcomes of the pilot JAR and the commentary provided in the council's self assessment. The council provided additional evidence on the 12<sup>th</sup> October, together with the action plan to address the JAR findings. Although the pilot JAR was undertaken to test methodology, it was agreed with the council that the evidence from the pilot JAR would contribute to the annual performance assessment. The available information was further reviewed as part of the Representation process. We are grateful for the information, which you provided to support all stages of the APA, and for the time made available by you and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

## **Being Healthy**

Children and young people in Sutton are generally healthy and the council is making a good contribution to this outcome. Teenage conceptions are reducing and performance on health checks for looked after children are good. Partnership work with health is strong, as evidenced by the implementation of the Children's Trust approaches with partners. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) strategy has been based upon a full needs assessment and is multi-disciplinary in composition. Although the pilot JAR commented on staffing shortages in CAMHS, the council report the equivalent of 3 additional posts will be recruited by December 2005.

One recommendation for action emerged from the pilot JAR process:

- the Director of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, together with commissioners, must take permanent steps to address capacity issues and ensure that children with the most acute needs receive treatment in a timely way.

Capacity to address this matter has been increased from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005 and the council is working with the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) to develop a more child centred model of service delivery.

## **Staying safe**

The council is making a satisfactory contribution towards ensuring that children and young people in Sutton are reasonably safe. The council has implemented a successful Child Concern model, which has led to an increase in referrals to the children and families service, although this could be additionally strengthened through collation and analysis of re-referral rates for children in need to ensure that the model is operating effectively. Progress is evident in the referral and assessment service, which the pilot JAR found to be simplified and improved. All children on the child protection register are reviewed on time, but there have been periods where cases have been unallocated to social workers due to staff shortages. To ensure good practice the council should continue to audit and monitor re-registrations, which have fallen. De-registrations show good performance. The Council needs to improve on the completion of initial assessments within timescales, together with core assessments which have recently dropped marginally after a period of improved performance assisted by focused management attention. The council report that all actions were completed to address the findings of the Social Services Inspectorate Children's Services inspection published in November 2003.

The Area Child Protection Committee is functioning satisfactorily with appropriate preparations underway to establish a Safeguarding Board.

The provision for looked after children is generally satisfactory but there are areas that require improvement, including the stability of placements and comprehensive allocation of qualified social workers. Less than half of looked after children have pathway plans separate from care plans, although care-leavers are well supported on completing their pathway plans. The majority of looked after children are in foster

placements or placed for adoption, although the pilot JAR found a shortage of placements in the borough with the associated risk of less rigorous oversight for those children and young people placed at a distance from Sutton. The council indicate that the percentage of over 14 year olds with disabilities who have transition plans stands at the top end of the 50–75% band, a higher number than originally reported. However, arrangements for resourcing identified needs in adult services for those who had turned 18 in 2004-05 were not in place for over 50% of the cohort.

The pilot JAR highlighted four actions to be taken immediately and one action to be taken over the next six months:

Immediate:

- the council should ensure that all staff working with children are subject to full and rigorous criminal records and personnel checks.
- the custodian of the child protection register must ensure that there is a satisfactory arrangement for the provision of a child protection register that is easily accessible to the emergency out of hours service and the accident and emergency department of St Helier Hospital.
- the Director of Learning for Life must ensure that there are sufficient qualified social workers to enable allocation of all children on the child protection register.
- the Director of Learning for Life should review and strengthen the arrangements for regular supervision and support of independent child protection chairs.

Next six months:

- the re-referral rate of children should be analysed to ensure the Child Concern Model is operating effectively.

The council has subsequently put in place the following appropriate actions:

- a policy has now been agreed on carrying out Criminal Record Bureau checks on staff working with children and young people with a progress report on its implementation to committee in the autumn; managers have been reminded of their responsibilities.
- an email link is now established with the accident and emergency unit at St Helier Hospital – registrations are now notified within the hour. Subscription to Child Protection Online is to be progressed with the target date of 1 October 2005 for implementation.
- 100% of child protection cases were allocated as at the end of March 2005 following a period in the early part of 2005 where the council report a lack of allocation due to staffing problems. During this period all core meetings and reviews were carried out.

- bi-monthly meetings are now in place for child protection conference chairpersons; six-monthly meetings take place on an individual basis with an annual review. Recruitment of new child protection conference chairpersons is underway.
- re-referrals will be subject to audit in the autumn; initial referrals are already reviewed twice yearly.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Children and young people in Sutton achieve well and the contribution made by services to helping children and young people to enjoy their education and achieve their full potential is good. Parents are generally well informed about school matters and the work of the Sure Start and Safer Sutton partnerships. In particular the borough gives effective support to the families of adolescents and those children and young people with disabilities. The quality of nursery education is good. Most Sutton schools provide good quality education and progress is very good in a quarter of schools. However in a third of primary schools at Key Stage 2 and in a few secondary schools pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. Though recently established, the local authority now has a credible and coherent strategy for tackling such weaknesses.

Schools and the council work very effectively together to improve school attendance and absence rates are low. Officers give particular support to schools in the most disadvantaged areas and when necessary are vigorous in tackling parents thought to be condoning their children's absence. The council's support to potentially disaffected or reluctant pupils and their schools is strong. Sutton is also successful in reducing exclusions from school and ensuring that re-integration programmes are well matched to pupils' needs, though a small number of the most hard to place pupils do not receive full time education. Since the pilot JAR plans to revise provision in the pupil referral units have been introduced.

For pupils with special educational needs (SEN) there is effective cross-agency work that provides well managed services to meet changing needs and priorities. Although the production, review and amendment of statements is efficient not all individual education plans are of good quality and children and young people are not consistently involved in reviewing their own progress.

The pilot JAR highlighted one action to be taken immediately:

- the council's elected members and the Director of Learning for Life should ensure that all pupils permanently excluded from school receive full-time education.

The council has made an appropriate response and:

- an action plan is in place to improve performance by July 2006 through re-organising the pupil referral unit to provide a re-integration programme at Key Stage 3, progression routes at Key Stage 4 and increased flexible learning opportunities. The expected 2004/05 figures for excluded pupils receiving full time education are likely to be similar to those for 2003/2004.

## **Making a positive contribution**

Outcomes in this area are good. Early Years provision is good overall. Personal, social and emotional development within childcare settings is of a good standard. Effective consultation with children takes place with 80% of looked after children contributing their views to their statutory review. Jigsaw4U, a voluntary sector organisation, is one example of good practice of work with the council on improving the level of consultation with children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

A number of strategies have been developed to reduce youth offending. The Children and Young Peoples Inclusion Support Panel provides effective planning, co-ordination and allocation of referrals to programmes across the borough. The Youth Offending Team (YOT) is well regarded and is a top performer compared with other YOTs in London. However, the level of looked after children involved in offending in Sutton is comparatively high, which the council intend to address through the appointment of a specialist worker to the YOT.

Children are generally well supported and included in making key transitions, although the pilot JAR indicates that transition of children with learning difficulties to adult services should be improved. A multi agency working group and Transition Unit has been established to address this and other related information management issues.

Sutton is the first borough in the country to both co-locate and merge council and police services under the Safer Sutton Partnership Service in order to provide integrated delivery of services to the community.

Overall the council's report into behaviour management and approaches to anti bullying found this well managed in the majority of schools and for the majority of pupils. However, incidents of bullying are not centrally recorded, which inhibits the authority's ability to analyse how separate groups of pupils are affected.

The pilot JAR made no recommendations in relation to this outcome.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The contribution of services in helping children and young people to achieve economic well-being was also satisfactory.

Childcare provision in Sutton is extensive and growing faster than the national rate to meet the demands of the local population. Priority places are allocated to families on working tax credits and day care provision is targeted on the most disadvantaged areas. The authority is committed to developing a comprehensive provision in the most disadvantaged wards. Children and parents are encouraged to learn together through the family education programme at Sutton College of Learning for Adults.

Despite close working relationships between the local authority, schools, the local college and other providers, education for young people aged 14-19 needs further

development. A concerted effort is now drawing together a range of diverse activities in line with the objectives of the Learning and Skills Council's strategic plan and additional planning and coordination are needed. Local colleges, in collaboration with schools, are providing a growing range of level one and level two vocational courses. A large number of modern apprenticeships are provided at a local collage but the completion rate is low. All secondary schools offer a variable number of sixth form courses and the local authority is actively encouraging greater co-operation to reduce the limited choice for some students.

The quality of careers education and guidance for children and young people is generally of a good standard and recent difficulties in recruiting personnel to the services have now been overcome. Work experience is very popular with young people in the borough and the council's summer work scheme is of particular benefit to looked after children and young people seeking asylum. Local partnerships are effectively reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training.

Despite limited opportunity to access additional funding Sutton has been successful in improving housing conditions for young people and their families in some parts of the borough. Young people leaving care express concern over their living environment though the council generally makes good housing provision for children and young people with disabilities through the disability housing panel.

The pilot JAR highlighted one action to be taken over the next 6 months:

- the Learning and Skills Council, the Director of Learning for Life and post-16 providers should develop an effective strategy for better co-ordination of post-16 provision so that curriculum opportunities can be extended.

The council has subsequently put in place the following action:

- a post-14 partnership conference was held in July 2005 to consider the way forward; the council is buying in a consultant to drive forward the implementation plan, which will be drawn up by October 2005.

## **Service management**

The council's capacity to improve is adequate. The council is cost-effective in that it performs above average overall for a relatively modest spend. The council has made good progress in establishing a single directorate for Learning for Life and Children's Services under a single Director. Integrated services and partnership working are developing well in specific areas and initiatives. However, strategic planning requires greater service cohesion and the plans must include measurable targets, timescales and financial data. Nevertheless, there is evidence of good practice in early years and Sure Start plans, and of effective work in education, youth services and youth offending activities. The council's arrangements for decision-making and scrutiny have

a strong emphasis on children's services. There is a broad range of preventative services.

There are clear proposals for the development of the joint commissioning of services and the establishment of a joint commissioning board. A new Assistant Director for Children's services has been jointly appointed and is based at the PCT.

Personal Social Services expenditure is increasing year on year but this is below government guidelines. Educational funding is in line with government policy. The council's budgets are generally well linked to priorities and budget management control and forecasting are good. The system for trading of management support services to schools does not promote school autonomy or guarantee high quality service or value for money.

Performance management systems are being developed with the council reporting increased effectiveness in the use of the PARIS information technology system. The council's comparative performance nationally on social care performance indicators has deteriorated and should be addressed.

The council faces significant challenges in the recruitment of social care staff and vacancies remain high, particularly in family support and care planning and in the Youth Offending Team. However, there have been achievements in other areas, including some fully staffed service teams in social care and the number of unfilled teacher posts that are below the national average.

The pilot JAR highlighted three actions to be taken over the next six months:

- the council should improve the systems which are used to monitor and evaluate the performance and value for money of all its services;
- the Children and Young People's Partnership should identify the needs of children, incorporate these into their strategic plan, commission services to meet them and take the necessary steps to establish their effectiveness in achieving good outcomes for children and young people; and
- the council should ensure all planning documents have financial and other resource requirements, milestones and measurable targets clearly set out.

To meet these recommendations the council has the following action underway:

- the Children and Young People's Plan is being revised, based upon a needs analysis and will include milestones and resource implications and arrangements for joint commissioning;
- system improvements will be linked to the council's Corporate Assessment Action Plan with monitoring by the Learning for Life Performance Committee, which covers education and children's social care services. In particular, performance indicators will be further developed for services offered to schools to ensure value for money

and that services are effectively scrutinised. The Children and Young People's Partnership will consider wider issues; and

- planning will ensure that financial and other resource requirements are met; milestones and measurable targets will be addressed through the Corporate Assessment Action Plan.

### **Final judgements**

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

Yours sincerely



**FLO HADLEY**

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Commission for Social Care Inspection



## APA final judgements 2005: London Borough of Sutton Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements <sup>1</sup>
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 capacity to improve its services for children and young people	2

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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