

26 November 2007

Mr Andrew Webster
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Surrey County Council
County Hall
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Dear Mr Webster

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SURREY COUNTY 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 where it was available, 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

Surrey County Council delivers services for children and young people at a good level in all but one aspect; the contribution to children's social care, with regard to staying safe, is adequate though there are signs of progress. The council is generally accurate in assessing the quality of its services and has made some improvements since the last annual assessment. The contribution the council makes towards improving outcomes for being healthy, enjoying and achieving, and achieving economic well-being all remain good. The council is strongly committed to embedding integrated services and improving outcomes for children and young people. The general management and capacity of the council's services to improve outcomes for children and young people are good.

Being healthy

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

The majority of children in Surrey get a good start in life. The council and its partners actively promote healthy lifestyles and ably support parents and carers in keeping their children healthy. There is an appropriate emphasis on prevention and early intervention, and access to primary health care for vulnerable groups is facilitated effectively. Outcomes from these activities are good. For example, in the majority of areas, rates of smoking during pregnancy and the percentages of babies with low birth weights are decreasing, while the rates of mothers initiating breast feeding are improving, as are immunisation rates. Key stakeholders recognise that there are variations in some health services and outcomes across the county. They have drawn up an appropriate strategy to tackle this.

Reducing obesity levels was a priority area in 2006–07, and a number of effective initiatives have been developed. A good example is the evaluation of the Happy2BHealthy partnership project which demonstrated that the children and families involved had achieved small, sustainable changes to their diet and physical activity levels. The strong partnership working benefits from some well-focused support from the voluntary sector. Small local voluntary and community groups are supported in setting up and running schemes such as the Chinese Association of Woking, and Horsehills Riding for the Disabled that promote healthy lifestyles. According to the Tellus2 survey a slightly lower percentage of Surrey's children and young people (6%) consider that they are not very healthy as opposed to the average for England (9%).

The great majority of schools are now well engaged in the Healthy Schools programme which had been identified in last year's annual performance as a weakness. This year national and local targets in relation to the Healthy Schools standards have been exceeded. In addition all schools in Surrey are now part of a School Sports Partnership. Overall the take up of sport and physical activity opportunities by children and young people including those from vulnerable groups is increasing and is now at a high level; 43% report that they do at least 30 minutes of activity, more than five days a week, which is higher than the average for England.

Easy access to appropriate contraceptive and sexual health services is provided by staff from a number of disciplines working effectively together in a range of provision including youth clubs, community centres and schools. Nevertheless, the impact on reducing teenage conceptions has not been as effective as the council would have hoped. Compared to national figures, teenage conception rates are low but they are declining more slowly than the national rate. Meeting the national target for 2010 is a significant challenge for Surrey. The council and its key partners recognise this and are reviewing their strategies.

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are a priority area and progress has been made in both mainstream and the more specific areas of CAMHS. Good examples include increased access to information and tier one and two services through schools and other agencies including children's centres. As well as the recruitment of a mental health worker, for minority ethnic and asylum seeker looked after children, in order to better respond to and commission culturally appropriate services. During the year further progress has been made towards providing a

comprehensive CAMHS. Performance is rated as good and is better than the average for England.

The needs of vulnerable children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are looked after are well met and improving. For example the capacity of the team covering health needs has been increased by the introduction of a specialist drugs worker. The percentage of looked after children who have had an annual health assessment and dental check continues to increase and this year went from 82% to 85%, which is better than the average for England. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good multi-agency team support.

Areas for development

- Work with partners to reduce the conception rate amongst 15 to 17-year-olds more rapidly.
- Tackle the differences in health provision across the county with partners.

Staying safe

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 works effectively with partners to reduce risks. The Local Safeguarding Children Board is well established. It has a sound work plan that covers an appropriate range of subjects. These have been identified through effective evaluation as needing further work or improvement. Appropriate levels of guidance and training are provided across all agencies including voluntary and community organisations.

According to the Tellus2 survey, most young people in Surrey feel safe; this is slightly higher than the national average. Measures to improve road safety and the safe use of roads, such as advice and support to teenage drivers, are having good outcomes, for instance there have been reductions in child road deaths and accidents. A good range of advice to parents or carers and their children on personal safety are available through numerous outlets and media. Safety and personal-care advice and support materials are included as part of the school curriculum. These are promoted through individual service led campaigns, such as fire safety campaigns and public open days.

A wide range of high quality, supportive, early intervention and safeguarding provision is available and is used successfully. Services are appropriately focused on vulnerable groups, for example those provided by children's centres specifically for families with children who have protection plans and those involved in domestic

violence. In 2006 91% of the cases referred to Families First, a service developed with National Children's Homes to support the families of young people aged 11+ who are at risk of family breakdown, did not need to be accommodated. In addition the Family Group Conference Service assists effectively with prevention, rehabilitation, kinship care, permanency and placement stability. Services, such as day care, over night and short break provision from in-house and voluntary sector providers support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is good planning for children with disabilities aged 14+ with over 90% having a transition plan to support their move from children's services to adult services.

During 2006–07 there was considerable organisational change to frontline children's services, creating new integrated arrangements delivered from localities, and specialist services delivered from two teams working in the east and west of the county. The change was well managed but it did impact negatively on some aspects of social care service performance in the period October to December 2006, such as completing assessments in a timely manner. However, performance recovered and improved after this period. An appropriate number of initial and core assessments are undertaken. The percentage of these completed within the required timescales dropped slightly but remains at an acceptable level. The low number of repeat referrals suggests that workers put well focused support or intervention in place and that most cases are not closed inappropriately. Common assessment framework arrangements have been piloted successfully in one area of Surrey and will be rolled out during 2007–08.

New front line arrangements undertaken to review risk management, and the commitment to learn from Serious Case Reviews has led to an increase in the number of children per 10,000 population, aged under 18 with a child protection plan, making it more in line with comparator authorities and England. A suitably qualified worker is allocated to all children with a child protection plan and all child protection reviews are held on time. Outcomes for children on the child protection register are improving slowly and are at an acceptable level or better. However, the pace of change is insufficient in some areas, such as on de-registration and re-registrations, the latter not having progressed beyond the acceptable level for the last four years. The council and its partners recognise this and are developing multi-agency plans to rectify the shortfalls in practice.

The majority (92%) of looked after children are allocated a suitably qualified worker who is actively coordinating a care plan. The timeliness of reviews has improved this year with 87% meeting national guidance, which is better than the average for similar councils and England. Recently the council adopted new processes and current data show further improvement. There are good outcomes for looked after children which include the stability of both short and long term placements, and the percentage of looked after children placed for adoption. Adoption plans are put in place speedily, with 79% of children being placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision. Progress has been made on increasing the number of foster carers but further placements are still needed especially for older children. The judgements of

the most recent inspections (in early 2007) of both the fostering and the adoption services were good.

Areas for development

- Improve timeliness of core assessments in line with the national standard.
- Improve the levels of re-registration and de-registration on the child protection register.
- Embed locality teams.

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.

Strengths from the last APA have been maintained and many of the areas for development have been addressed systematically. There is good attainment at all Key Stages, with improvements from an already high base in some aspects. In particular, the upward trend in GCSE results has been maintained, and has been faster than the national trend on some measures. The council recognises that more work is needed to reduce the relatively high number of exclusions. With regards to looked after children, there have been improvements, but more work is required to narrow the gap with their peers. Results from the Tellus2 survey show that, on the whole, children and young people in Surrey enjoy school and try their best.

The Foundation Stage profile data shows that achievement is in line with or above the national average for children achieving 6+ across all thirteen scales. Data for Key Stages 1, 2, and 3 compares well both against both national averages and comparable councils. At GCSE, the upward trend of average point scores is generally in line with that found nationally, but started from a higher base line. There was a notable increase in the percentage attaining Level 2 qualifications (including English and mathematics) which increased faster than nationally and in similar councils to a figure of 53.5% in 2006.

Children and young people from the gypsy, traveller, and Roma communities continue to do well and there have been some improvements with regards to achievement of those from ethnic minorities. The achievement of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is mixed but still sound; this is supported by analysing the judgements on progress found in the evidence of special schools in the area which have been inspected. The outcome is better than in similar councils.

Good progress is made in the primary phase, as was confirmed by an Ofsted inspection which evaluated the effects of work by the council on implementing the National Strategies. Progress during Key Stage 3 has been maintained at a relatively high level. However, the council does recognise that the value added during Key Stage 4, though slightly better than in 2005, was too low in a number of schools in 2006. As a result the council has undertaken to deliver training, on tracking children and young people's progress, to all its secondary schools. Early indications are that this has had some positive effect, but the data has yet to be fully validated.

Inspection evidence shows that almost four-fifths of primary schools are good, including a fifth which are outstanding. The council recognises that there is some variation between different types of primary schools and has undertaken extra work to track children and young people's progress in junior schools. Half the secondary schools are judged to be at least good. There are a high number of outstanding special schools, with key strengths in inter-agency working and partnerships.

Attendance is good in nursery and most primary and special schools, it is satisfactory in secondary schools. Overall, attendance rates in primary schools are above the national average and in secondary schools are close to the national average. The level of permanent exclusions rose in 2006 and is now above the national average. The council has identified six schools where there are issues over behaviour management and has targeted the support of behaviour management teams on these schools. As yet, there is no solid evidence of whether there are improvements.

For primary schools in a category of concern, there have been positive developments over the year. Three schools are no longer deemed as requiring special measures, including one which shut over the summer to remove surplus places. Two primary schools in special measures are making satisfactory progress and there has also been progress with regard to primary schools which require significant improvement.

Two secondary schools have made significant improvement, whilst two others still require extra support. One secondary school subject to special measures at the time of re-inspection has formed a soft federation with a successful secondary school, thereby improving its capacity for improvement. The local authority has its own list of schools of possible concern; currently there are about 34 schools on this list which is a reduction from the 40 schools last year. It is sometimes difficult to recruit and retain staff in the more challenging schools in Surrey.

There have been some improvements in the attainment of looked after children. A higher percentage are in school and attained 5 or more higher grades at GCSE than in comparable councils. The percentage attaining at least one GCSE rose to 47% but is still below the national average. The gap between the attainment of Surrey children and those who are looked after remains high. The council recognise that more work is needed and has set, as one of its four overall main priorities, to ensure that looked after children grow up better equipped for life, particularly through education.

Areas for development

- Continue work to improve progress during Key Stage 4.
- Reduce the number of permanent exclusions by improving the quality of behaviour management.

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.

High quality mentoring and other multi-agency initiatives are in place to support individuals and groups of children to develop socially and emotionally. A good example is the Surrey Peer Support Service (SPSS), funded by Connexions and hosted by the Primary Care Trust (PCT), which is aimed at secondary schools to promote a culture of positive well-being. Services are used effectively by children and their families, including those needing support at challenging times. The council facilitates a range of projects that are focusing on vulnerable groups, for example independent schemes supporting young carers in all aspects of their lives.

All groups of young people are encouraged strongly to participate in decisions and they are represented in key strategic forums, such as the Corporate Parenting Group. There are also a number of other opportunities for them to express their views, including school councils and the Surrey Youth Parliament. The latter is in its fifth year, and during the 2006 elections, became more diverse with representatives from young disabled people, young parents, Asian young women, and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are numerous examples of where the views and opinions of children and young people have helped to shape and evaluate services. A good example of this is that young people have been members of the working groups drawing up the council's travel plans. A key development in the past year has been the "Take Part, Take Power" approach to implementing the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund programmes. This devolves decision making to young people as 'grant givers' in order to develop local projects and allows them to make a positive contribution in their communities.

A higher percentage of Surrey's looked after children were involved in making decisions about their own lives by participating in reviews (91% this year as opposed to 76% last year). Performance is now better than the average for England. This significant improvement has been achieved by the expansion of the on-line 'Viewpoint' programme and by individualising ways of involving hard to reach children such as some disabled children. Viewpoint is also used for children of foster carers to give their views to foster carer reviews.

There is a high take up of the extensive range of recreational and voluntary learning activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's Youth Engagement Scheme by young people, including looked after

children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In addition during 2006–07 the percentage of young people reached by youth services rose from 29.9% to 31.9%, which is higher than the average for England. An increased number of these young people were successfully involved in accreditation programmes. Surrey's strong, longstanding culture of celebrating young people's views and achievements continues through events such as the annual 'Celebration of Youth'. This acknowledged the achievements and contributions of over 150 young volunteers from across the county to the communities in which they live.

In addition there a number of activities across the county targeted at young people at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour. These have been shown to have good outcomes, for instance evaluation of the Coldingly Crime Diversion Scheme shows that not only are young people diverted from crime, but they continue to engage in youth development services programmes. During 2006–07 Surrey Youth Justice Service has improved its performance against re-offending targets. Both the first tier and community penalty sentencing bands saw a reduction in recidivism as measured over two years from 67% to 58% and 83% to 76% respectively. There was a notable decrease in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system and the proportion of looked after children given a caution or conviction in the last year also decreased and is now better than the national average.

Area for development

- Continue to work with partners to put in place services that support young offenders and reduce re-offending rates in all four areas of pre-court, first tier, community, and custodial penalties.

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. The strengths from the previous APA have been maintained and good progress has been made in the areas identified for further development.

There is a slightly higher growth in full time child care settings than nationally; the overall quality of early years provision is good. Attainment has improved in some aspects. Vocational provision has increased with a higher take-up in Key Stage 4.

The percentage of young people gaining Level 2 qualifications by the age of 19 is well above the national average at 75% in 2006, a similar figure to 2005; there is firm evidence to show that the figure for 2007 will be higher because of an improvement to 75% for 18-year-olds in 2006. Alternative ways of attaining Level 2, such as through apprenticeships are being developed. The percentage gaining Level 3 qualifications in 2006 is 57% which is higher than the national average. The proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training at ages 16–18 remains very low and also for young people aged 19.

Inspection evidence confirms that there are some outstanding providers both in terms of school sixth forms and sixth form colleges. The promotion of economic understanding is better than in schools in comparable councils. There has been a notable increase in participation in vocational courses by over 10 percentage points, so that about a third of Key Stage 4 pupils are now involved.

Sixth form provision in special schools is strong. There has also been an increase in provision of Level 1 and 2 courses to help young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The relative proportion of looked after children in education, training and employment fell slightly in 2006, but is still very good. Well over four fifths live in suitable accommodation.

An innovative element of the 14–19 strategy is that elected members sit on the joint advisory board, helping to move the agenda forward. The authority is one of ten authorities invited to be involved in a national pilot. All the consortia for 14–19 are now working more closely together and all have some pooled funding; five independent schools have expressed an interest in publishing course information on the local area prospectus.

All the five diploma lines, including construction which was initially not accepted, have been awarded for 2008. The diplomas involve five of the twelve consortia in Surrey and are in appropriate locations across the county according to the skills' needs of young people. Efforts have also been made to link to current and future employment needs.

The Council recognises that more needs to be done to enhance employer engagement. It also needs to ensure that facilities for curricular provision are sufficient to match changing requirements.

Area for development

- Continue work to increase the range of opportunities for young people to attain Level 2 qualifications after they reach the age of 16

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

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council has clear ambitions and has good capacity to improve its services for children and young people, after a year of significant change. Its management of services is good. It recognises that its social care services remain adequate. The quality of support for improving inclusion across all its services is good.

The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) for 2006–09 is comprehensive and detailed in many respects. A detailed evaluation of its first year of operation has been undertaken. A review of this plan shows that good performance has been

maintained in most aspects. There is an effective performance management framework, used by senior managers to drive and sustain improvement. Common and transparent data is collected by locality and county-wide, with a focus on processes as well as some key outcomes. In a time of change the council has managed to maintain the quality of performance, whilst establishing structures with longer term financial viability.

The new Services for Families Directorate facilitates a families' focus to caring and supporting those who most need help in realising a better quality of life and a more positive future. Education and social care services are joined at the front line through integrated locality teams based upon Surrey's eleven District and Borough boundaries, supported by area and countywide specialist and targeted services. The teams have been able to identify if issues arise, such as on exclusions, and put strategies in place to address the underlying causes. New social work posts have also been created in the teams. Though the vacancy rate in children's services is high, retention rates have improved markedly.

The council has continued work to improve aspects of social care with planned changes in practice, whilst also recognising that the processes and procedures need to be fully embedded. Internal figures showed some slippage relating to initial assessments early in the year. Data was used to identify where the problem was occurring and action was taken to rectify the problem quickly.

The response of schools to the Audit Commission survey is not as good as for other councils, but the response rate was low. This comes at a time when extra challenge is being posed to schools which also have high expectations of the services provided by the council, under its new management structure. The council has yet to discuss the survey with schools.

The provision of school places has improved. The proportion of primary schools with 25% or more surplus places has decreased and the council continues to take decisive action to close primary schools where numbers have fallen. For secondary schools, the proportion is also below the national average and actions have been taken to amend admission numbers in some schools.

School improvement services have demonstrated their capacity to maintain and raise standards and improve the overall quality of provision; taking strident action where required to close and fresh start a school for example, or work with governors to take necessary action. A recent Ofsted inspection judged the overall leadership and management of school improvement and national strategy teams as very good. This is because good practice is identified and reflected upon in successful schools, so that more important improvements can be targeted in weaker schools.

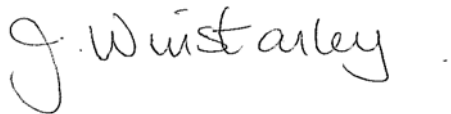
Areas for development

- Fully embed processes and procedures to speed up changes in social care.

- Improve communications with schools to ensure that they fully understand the role of the multi-disciplinary teams.

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