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Mr Nick Whitfield
Director of Education and Children's Services
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
1st Floor
Regal House
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Twickenham
TW1 3QB

Dear Mr Whitfield

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames 2008

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	4
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	4
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	4
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	4

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 4

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames consistently delivers outstanding services for children and young people. The council and its partners have maintained and steadily improved upon performance over the past year in most areas of work. A continuing theme is the significant difference that the borough makes to the lives of the most vulnerable, particularly those who are looked after and those with a learning difficulty and/or disability. The outcomes for these particular groups of children and young people were judged to be outstanding in the joint area review report, published in December 2007. The quality of local services for safeguarding was also judged to be outstanding and this has been maintained.

The council has made good progress since the joint area review and the last APA in improving the services provided by the child and adolescent mental health service. In partnership with the Primary Care Trust, prompt and robust action was taken and early indications are that this has begun to make a difference to the availability and timeliness of services. Actions to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies are not securely embedded across all relevant strategies. Children and young people in the borough generally attain high standards, particularly at primary school level. This continues to represent a good contribution to the progress that they make and to their enjoyment of school. The proportion of young people between the ages of 14 and 19 engaged in education, employment or training is excellent, making an outstanding contribution to their economic well-being. The council is very effective in involving children and young people in the development and review of services that affect them. Their views and concerns are highly valued and this enables them not only to participate but also to actively contribute to the work of the council.

The council has outstanding capacity to improve its services further, as was judged in the joint area review report.

Being healthy

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The partnership’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimates an important weakness and overvalues the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles through multi-agency health promotion work. As a result the proportion of mothers initiating breast-feeding is high and the targets for schools with Healthy School status have already been exceeded. ▪ Outstanding provision is made for the health needs of looked after children and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been an increase in the rate of teenage conceptions and targets in this area have not been met. |
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Staying safe

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding is very effectively promoted through the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The stability of placements for looked after children and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. There are effective protocols to safeguard missing children. |
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Important weaknesses and areas for development

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic attainment is high, particularly for those at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Outcomes for children and young people who are looked after and those with a learning difficulty and/or disability are good. |
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Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportions of students gaining at least Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3 and those gaining good GCSEs has improved but are not yet at the expected levels in comparison with those of similar councils. |
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Making a positive contribution

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young people, including those from disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups, are closely involved in service planning and decision-making. ▪ The proportion of supervised juveniles in full time education, training and employment remains above the averages nationally and for similar councils.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Although the proportion of those offending for the first time has increased, the numbers are consistently low.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very high proportions of 14- to 19-year-olds in education employment or training. ▪ Continued improvement in curricular opportunities for 14- to 19-year-olds.
Important weaknesses and areas for development

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

Grade 4

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is outstanding. The services are well managed and senior officers work tirelessly to improve the outcomes for children and young people. The council and its partners have high ambitions for all children and high performance has been sustained over time. A sharp focus on services for vulnerable groups has resulted in positive outcomes for looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good partnership working is having a positive impact at strategic and operational levels with evidence of impact in the improved strategy for the child and adolescent mental health services.

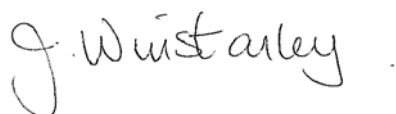
A shared understanding of local priorities, and assertive and decisive actions taken in response to underperformance have resulted in improved outcomes in almost all areas of the council's work. In its self-assessment, the council shows a clear awareness of the areas in need of further improvement. Its analysis of its strengths and areas for development is consistent with the evidence overall. However, it has underestimated the importance of missing the targets for reducing the rates of teenage conceptions. A sharper focus is needed to ensure actions to reduce teenage conceptions are incorporated into all relevant local strategies. The council and its partners are very good at responding to emerging issues and recommendations although there are some service areas where this could be improved to inform future planning.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The council has an outstanding track record of improvement.▪ There are high ambitions to improve the outcomes for children and young people.▪ Responses to issues, concerns and recommendations are speedy and creative.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The self-assessment underestimates the importance of missing locally set targets for reducing rates of teenage conception.

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.

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.

Yours sincerely



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection