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Mr Mike Dillon
Director of Children's Services
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Council Offices
Kirkleatham Street
Redcar
TS10 1YA

Dear Mr Dillon

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council 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	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3

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

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

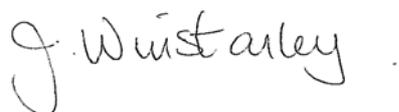
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people. It consistently delivers services which are above minimum requirements. It has sustained strong performance in improving provision and outcomes for children and young people since the last APA in 2007. As yet, the council has not had an opportunity to demonstrate progress against the areas for development highlighted in the JAR report which was published in September 2008. Effective action has been taken to promote healthy lifestyles and improve the health of children and young people. Significant improvements have been made in reducing rates of substance misuse and in improving sexual health. The arrangements to safeguard children and young people appear good, although the JAR highlighted that only 60% of core assessments are completed within the required timeframe. Educational achievement is good and standards continue to improve. However, outcomes at the end of the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and in the number of young people achieving five A* to C passes at GCSE including English and mathematics remain below national expectations. The strong involvement of children and young people in decision making ensures they make a positive contribution to the area. The council makes a good contribution to the economic well-being of young people by ensuring children and young people are well prepared and knowledgeable about the world of work, despite the low levels of work-based learning opportunities in the borough. Progress towards reducing the proportion of young people not engaged in education, employment or training identified in the last APA has been made. However, there needs to be further improvement in the proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those supervised by the youth offending team in education, employment or training post-16.

The council's capacity to improve, including its management of services, is good. It demonstrates a strong ambition for improving outcomes for children and young people and has maintained an upward trend in most areas of its work. A clear emphasis is placed on preventative work in child protection with those who are most at risk. Rigorous analysis of need, effective consultation with users of services and effective partnership working at an operational level ensure looked after children and those leaving care receive very good levels of care and support. Support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is more variable. The JAR recommended the need for an overarching strategy in this area and the need for greater partnership working at a more strategic level. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development is consistent with the evidence.

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 as part of this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues in preparing for the assessment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection

Major strengths and important weaknesses

Major strengths	Important weaknesses and areas for development
<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council has taken effective action to promote healthy lifestyles and improve the health of children and young people. ▪ The child and adolescent mental health service provides a good service to children and young people in the borough. ▪ A good service of early intervention and prevention, where young people are misusing substances or putting their sexual health at risk, has been successful and improved from last year. 	<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Older children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can experience delays in receiving specialist medical help.
<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very effective multi-agency work and provision have improved the safeguarding arrangements for looked after children. ▪ Effective action has been taken to tackle bullying and domestic violence. ▪ The recent JAR judged safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children to be good. ▪ Effective transition planning is in place for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. 	<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of core assessments completed within the required timescales is less than in similar council areas. ▪ There is a shortage of appropriate accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds leaving care.
<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective use of high quality data to ensure support to schools and learners is well targeted and has resulted in improved achievement, as indicated by good and improving inspection outcomes. ▪ No primary or secondary school is in an Ofsted category of concern. ▪ Work on improving behaviour and reducing absence from school is very effective. Attendance rates are improving and the rate of exclusions is well below average. ▪ Effective multi-agency working is providing well-targeted support for vulnerable families and young people. 	<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council has addressed the areas for development identified in the previous APA and standards at Key Stage 4 and the Foundation Stage have improved. Key Stage 1 standards dipped in 2006-7.

<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong involvement of children and young people in decision-making, particularly looked after children. ▪ The council has successfully encouraged increasing numbers of children and young people, particularly those looked after by the council, to become involved in decision making which affects their lives. ▪ The review figures for looked after children are very high. 	<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High rates of re-offending and an increase in the offending rates of looked after children.
<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The service provided for those leaving care is excellent and is highly regarded by the young people supported in this way. ▪ Level 2 and Level 3 achievements are higher than in similar areas. 	<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite a declining trend over time, 12.1%, a significant proportion of young people, are not engaged in education, employment or training, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those supervised by the youth offending team.
<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children's services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The recent JAR judged capacity to improve as good. ▪ The council's shared vision and ambition sets clear priorities for continued improvement and demonstrates strong operational partnership working with high levels of involvement of service users in decision-making processes. ▪ Accurate evaluation and detailed monitoring of key performance indicators have ensured that prompt and focused actions have been taken to tackle and/or prevent weaknesses. 	<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children's services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of an overarching strategy for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.