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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mrs Lewis

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN REDCAR AND CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded ¹
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 <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council makes good provision for children and young people. This provision is increasingly benefiting from the work of the joint directorate in bringing together education and children's social care. It is resulting in more coherent and efficient provision for children and young people. Outcomes are improving in many areas although as the authority acknowledges, not all outcomes have improved sufficiently in all areas. There are strengths in the priority given to vulnerable groups in plans and service provision and outcomes are improving for these children and young people. Weaker aspects are initiatives to improve the health of all children and young people and achievements and standards in secondary schools. Securing improvement for secondary school pupils is an unambiguous priority in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The authority has taken action to improve the weaker areas identified in last year's APA, and has secured improved outcomes in most areas, particularly in reducing levels of exclusions and promoting children's safety. The council has a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses and a strong sense of how it wants to improve services and outcomes for children, young people and their families in each locality area within the borough. It works very effectively with partners to maximise the impact of resources to benefit children and young people. Hence it has good capacity to improve its services further.

Being healthy

The contribution of the authority's children services towards improving the health of children and young people is adequate. Although services for younger children and their families and for vulnerable groups are achieving good outcomes, there is little evidence to show that the authority's services are impacting significantly on the health of the majority of children and young people.

Despite considerable effort from the authority to reduce teenage conception rates, the positive trend from 1998 has recently been reversed. The authority is working to reduce the level of sexually transmitted infections among young people, which has significantly increased recently.

The authority is a high focus area in relation to substance abuse and good progress is being made in addressing substance misuse among young people.

Although school inspection judgements are good for learners' healthy lifestyles, relatively few inspections have been carried out since September 2005. The number of schools achieving the Healthy School Award is very low compared with other authorities in the region. Sure Start provides good quality support to parents across the authority area in relation to understanding children's health and promoting healthier lifestyles.

Joint funding with Primary Care Trusts and a neighbouring council has resulted in a more integrated and effective Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), particularly for looked after children. A national audit indicated that local service development is good in meeting milestones compared with other councils. The CAMHS

team has recently moved to more accessible centrally located premises within the authority.

The council has had some difficulty in arranging annual health checks for some looked after children. However, it has achieved significantly better overall health outcomes for looked after children by improving the working arrangements for the dedicated looked after children nurse. The health needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully addressed in partnership with the health services and schools through robustly monitored care planning processes.

There is little evidence that the council is effectively promoting sporting and physical activity for all children and young people.

Staying safe

The authority's children's services make a good contribution towards promoting and securing the safety of children and young people in the area. The existing strength of social care services in safeguarding children and young people has been enhanced through joint working in the new Directorate and ongoing improvements in work with external partners. Support for vulnerable children and young people is high on the council's agenda and good systems and partnerships sustain good outcomes. The new integrated Directorate is improving this further.

Children are properly safeguarded in schools. The council's effectiveness in ensuring that children are safeguarded is recognised by schools. Eliminating bullying is a key priority for the council and there is good evidence to show that bullying is being effectively addressed across a wide front. This is a good example of a positive response by the council to consultation with children and young people. Work to support black and minority ethnic children is helping to ensure that they feel safer in their local communities.

The management of referrals of children in need is effective and, although core assessments have been taking too long to complete, the council has addressed this issue very effectively and can evidence much improved performance recently.

Child protection registrations are reducing. Cases are being responded to and managed well and are subject to very effective scrutiny. Children are only registered when they need to be and do not stay on the register longer than is necessary. The South Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has been successfully established in conjunction with Middlesbrough council and other relevant partners. This has resulted in increased funding and staffing beyond that of the previous Area Child Protection Committee. Serious childcare incidents are handled well by the council in collaboration with partner agencies.

The number of children looked after by the council has remained steady and is below the national average. The short term stability of placements of looked after children is good and has improved further, but the council is having less success in sustaining

stability over the longer term, in common with many other councils. A good proportion of looked after children are being adopted and delays in the process have been reduced. There are very good arrangements to support care leavers in moving safely towards full independence.

Systems have recently been further developed to more effectively identify the whereabouts of children and young people.

The council has made good progress in implementing the Reducing Youth Offending Generic National Solution (RYOGENS) IT-based information sharing system in West Redcar. This enables all agencies that support children, to access common information.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution of the authority's children's services to ensuring children and young people achieve at schools and enjoy their education and leisure activities, is good overall. However, as the authority acknowledges, the achievements of pupils in secondary schools in 2005 were too low. This represented a fall from 2004 when pupils' achievements were in line with those in similar authorities and national averages. Raising standards in secondary schools is, rightly, a key priority within the CYPP and a target for the council. The authority and its schools have adopted more rigorous procedures to monitor pupils' progress and the authority has targeted its support more precisely to the needs of individual schools. There is evidence from the authority's monitoring that standards are again rising. School inspection evidence indicates that the authority now challenges its schools robustly.

Early years provision is good and the quality of some aspects has received national recognition. This provision enables the youngest children to make a good start to their education. Good partnership with primary schools, including well targeted improvement strategies, means that pupils sustain standards which are broadly in-line with national averages. School inspections note that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally make good progress. The authority has improved the rate at which statements of special educational needs are produced and all are now completed within 18 weeks. The authority's careful monitoring of its looked after children, and the quality of support for them is resulting in improvements in their attendance. The high priority afforded to these children and young people is reflected in the CYPP, in which raising their attainment and attendance further is a key priority.

Attendance in both primary and secondary schools is comparable to that in similar authorities and national averages. However, authorised absence remains relatively high. The strategies which the authority is adopting, including the use of penalty notices, is improving the attendance of targeted pupils. There has been good development in the authority's support for behaviour in schools which is reducing exclusions. There is now a range of support for schools to access, which results from the authority's effective use of a range of strategies and funding streams. Behaviour support is enhanced through significantly improved partnership work. This results from restructured teams in the combined Directorate, as well as the establishment of clear

protocols with schools and good links with external partners. The provision made for excluded pupils is also improving, following a robust review.

The authority's action to remove surplus places, improve the quality of learning environments and develop extended schools is continuing effectively. As a result, increasing numbers of children, young people and their families are benefiting from greatly improved facilities.

The authority is taking good steps to improve access to recreational activities, including the development of extended schools. It provides good support to help vulnerable groups, including looked after children, to access facilities through the provision of leisure cards. Good attention is paid to providing facilities in rural settings, including Sure Start play-buses for the youngest children. The youth service is well funded in comparison with similar authorities. Inspection evidence indicates that children are happy at school and that schools provide a good range of additional activities.

Making a positive contribution

The council's contribution to outcomes for children in this area is good. There is now a well established culture of consultation with children and young people across all services, which continues to be developed. There is a clear recognition of the need to ensure that consultation with, and the participation of children and young people, results in clear outcomes which are fed back to all concerned. This is particularly the case with vulnerable young people who are engaged with council services.

Significant effort has been made to involve young people in decision-making and in the wider community agenda, in relation to citizenship and contemporary issues. There is a strong commitment to developing this process further.

School inspection judgements indicate that learners do make a positive contribution. The council has been very successful in supporting those at risk of exclusion at transition to secondary school.

The council and its partners are targeting anti-social behaviour through a range of initiatives and they are able to evidence a good deal of success particularly in relation to bullying, re-offending and school exclusions. There has been good involvement of young people themselves in anti-bullying activities and this has led to them gaining national achievement awards.

Although there has been a slight increase in re-offending across the South Tees area, the level is still below that of similar authorities. The RYGENS IT-based information system is now being used effectively to target resources appropriately at offending behaviours.

The social care service continues to be at the forefront of promoting consultation and participation in all its engagements with vulnerable children and young people and their families. All looked after children participate in their reviews and are encouraged to

contribute their views through the Viewpoint system. Care leavers receive good quality support to help them achieve independence and fulfil their potential. Young people who are carers themselves are well supported. The incidence of looked after children offending is reducing but is still a cause for concern.

Children with learning disabilities and their families are effectively involved in decision-making and the council has developed good inclusive consultation systems. Person-centred planning has become a feature of transition planning for young people.

Achieving economic well-being

The contribution of the authority's children's services to enabling children and young people to achieve economic well-being is adequate overall. There are significant strengths in work with the most vulnerable groups, but the overall strategy for 14–19 education and training is not yet finalised or fully implemented.

The support for looked after children, to enable them to achieve independence, is of high quality. The quality of the council's support for care leavers has received national recognition. There continues to be good support at key points to ensure these young people, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good guidance and that their reviews are focused well on their individual needs. The authority is making increasingly effective use of a range of initiatives, grants and direct payments to support its young people and help them to access education and training. Although the number involved is relatively small, the authority has provided effective alternative courses which have enabled some students to gain qualifications and employment.

As the authority recognises, the number of young people not in education, employment and training is too high. Reducing this figure is a key priority in the CYPP. There is some improvement, but not yet enough and the figure remains above the national average. However, the authority's information systems are improving, hence there has been a marked reduction in the number of young people whose whereabouts in relation to education, employment or training is not known. Transition mentors, who support students as they move from school to college or training, have contributed to this improvement. Their work has been recognised beyond the authority for its good practice.

Steps have been taken to develop the strategy for 14–19 education, but it remains a draft document. However, there is now a clearer consensus with partners for medium and long term objectives, and improvements have been made in provision for post-16 students in particular in the short term. Students now have information on post-16 education and training across the borough and a protocol has been reached between partners to rationalise future provision. The authority has recently secured funding for a new post-16 centre which will improve markedly the opportunities for students in that part of the borough.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

The leadership and management of services for children and young people are good. Priorities are based on an analysis of need, with particular emphasis placed on ensuring the quality of provision and outcomes for the most vulnerable. There is a clear direction for children's services which is designed to improve the coherence and quality of provision at a local level within the authority. The merger of education and children's services has been well managed and collaboration between officers is increasingly effective in improving the quality and efficiency of provision for children and young people. Performance management is clearly structured and increasingly robust and the authority has improved its information and communications systems so that it is better informed.

Good, often creative partnerships with a wide range of external agencies and organisations are enabling the authority to tackle ambitious goals and to make effective use of shared resources. The council has demonstrated its determination to tackle challenging issues, such as surplus school places, thus making more effective use of resources, as well as improving the quality of provision. Consultation is a strength of service management, including the consultation with children and young people. This is coupled with a strong sense of the council's responsibility to respond to consultation and translate it into policy and action. The development of the anti-bullying strategy is an example of this, as is the consultation over the priorities in the CYPP.

The authority is still at a point of transition, with further restructuring to be undertaken as well as embedding new teams and systems. It acknowledges that the impact of its work is not yet fully reflected in improved outcomes for young people in all areas. Nonetheless, its capacity for further development is good. The clarity of direction, the strengths of the council's partnerships and the targeting of resources to priorities are significant contributory factors. There are challenges to be faced in the transition to a new senior team with revised responsibilities. The work of the department is, however, underpinned by coherent operational work between teams of officers who have responded to the opportunities and challenges of the new Directorate with enthusiasm and commitment.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • action to reduce substance abuse • promoting healthy lifestyles in young families • CAMHS provision on a locality basis • the promotion of the health of looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proportion of schools with a Healthy School Award • teenage conception rate • improving the health of all children • promoting sport and physical activity for all children.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measures to safeguard and protect children • effective partnership and use of resources in establishing the LSCB. • stability of placements for looked after children • action to reduce bullying • implementation of information sharing system. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timeliness of core assessments.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision for early years • the range of support for behaviour which is resulting in fewer exclusions • improved learning environments as a result of new school buildings. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievement and standards in secondary schools.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well established culture of consultation with children • effective response to consultation with children and their parents and carers • support for care leavers • support for young carers. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rates of re-offending.

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for care leavers • improved information on education and training opportunities across the borough for school leavers • improved information about the number of young people moving into education, employment and training at 16. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the implementation of the 14–19 strategy • participation rates post-16.
<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear direction for improvement • the establishment of a joint Directorate which is bringing about more effective and efficient services for children and young people • partnership work which improves provision and makes good use of resources. 	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping a sharp focus on the outcomes for children and young people, not least through the transition period.

Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

Being healthy:

- improving the health of **all** children, including the promotion of sport and physical activity for **all** children.

Enjoying and achieving:

- achievement and standards in secondary schools.

Achieving economic well-being

- the implementation of the 14–19 strategy and its impact on standards at 16 and 18, and participation rates post-16.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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