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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Mrs Lynda Fisher  
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**1 November 2006**

Dear Mrs Fisher

**2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment 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 <sup>1</sup>
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	2

<sup>1</sup>

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

The overall contribution of Portsmouth City Council to maintaining and improving outcomes for children is good but the contribution for social care outcomes is only adequate. There is good capacity to improve. The Children and Young People's Plan takes good account of the views of children and young people and demonstrates good levels of partnership working. Good progress has been made in implementing the Change for Children programme and in integrating services. Many of the areas identified in last year's annual performance assessment (APA) have been subject to carefully targeted action.

## **Being healthy**

The authority makes a good contribution to outcomes in this area. There is clear evidence of effective multi-agency working and this is having a positive impact on promoting healthy lifestyles for children and young people. Children's participation is actively encouraged and there is a varied range of healthy eating events and projects, including the healthy lunch box challenge. In November, 90% of schools attended the launch of the National Healthy Schools initiative; most schools have already exceeded government targets.

A multi-agency group is reviewing and monitoring services for children and young people with mental health problems. Joint working protocols are in place with agencies working well together to provide 24 hour emergency cover. The local authority has robust plans in place aimed at achieving additional mental health services for children and young people with learning disabilities and for children age 16 to 17 years who require specialist treatment.

Almost all looked after children are having their health needs met, with the local authority's performance being higher than both statistical neighbours and national performance. Inspections of the local authority's children's homes and fostering services confirm that all looked after children receive a health assessment by a dedicated children's nurse who ensures there is an appropriate health plan.

Children are successfully encouraged to participate in physical exercise and this is conducted through the sports coordinator project across all secondary schools in the local authority. Looked after children and their carers are issued with a leisure card which provides subsidised access to leisure facilities.

The Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board has identified that the local authority needs to take further action in relation to decreasing conception rates of 15-17 year olds as the rate of improvement is lower than that of the local authority's statistical neighbours and the national picture.

Partnership agencies have achieved positive improvements to the numbers of children who are receiving childhood immunisations and they have exceeded their targets.

## Staying safe

The local authority makes an adequate contribution to outcomes in this area although some progress has been made since 2004/2005.

All partner agencies have agreed the local authority's safeguarding procedures with representatives being part of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. All staff within the trust have child protection training as part of their induction. Help and advice on a range of issues including child protection is provided in a parenting handbook distributed to all parents.

The local authority has an identified officer working with all schools to develop safer routes for pupils to take to their schools with 68% having school travel plans in place.

The action taken by the local authority since last year in restructuring the children's teams has had a positive impact on their performance. The timeliness of core assessments has increased significantly in 2005/06 and is now at a very good level. However the volume of core assessments undertaken remains high, despite the council wishing to reduce these to concentrate resources elsewhere. The timeliness of initial assessments has improved since 2004/05 but is still only at the average for comparator councils.

There are some examples of good performance within the child protection system, but there are areas where performance has dipped. Performance with respect to the duration that children are on the register remains good; the data indicates that children do not stay on the register too long. But the timeliness of reviews of children on the Child Protection Register and the rate of re-registration of children on the register has deteriorated slightly.

Most looked after children have secure and stable placements with the local authority's performance remaining at a high level. Further improvements have been made in the long-term stability of fostered looked after children since last year and the local authority's performance is at an acceptable level and is comparable with the national trend. The improvement in stability is also having a positive effect on the good performance of looked after children's educational achievement; this was highlighted during inspections of the local authority children's homes, fostering services and the adoption services. The timeliness of reviews of looked after children is well below the national average and that of comparator councils.

Adoption of looked after children continues to be an area the council needs to improve as performance remains considerably below that of national and comparator councils. The local authority continues to develop initiatives to address the issues, including those relating to a small cohort of children, who have had a negative impact on performance. However, of those children identified for adoption, the local authority has been successful in achieving 100% of cases being adopted within 12 months of their best interest decision being made.

## Enjoying and achieving

The contribution of the local authority to ensuring that children and young people achieve at school and enjoy their education and leisure activities is satisfactory with some good features. The work of the local authority continues to impact on and improve the level of pupils' attainment in all key stages. However, standards in some areas remain below those of the local authority's statistical neighbours.

Provision for early years education continues to be very good across a range of settings, providing good support for meeting early learning goals. Portsmouth achieves above the national average scores in all areas of the Foundation Stage Profile. Pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 are in line with national averages in reading and writing, and better than the national average and continuing to improve in mathematics.

Standards in English at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 are in line with those of the local authority's statistical neighbours and the rate of improvement is above the national average. The local authority has provided effective support for improving standards in writing, particularly for boys. There was a large improvement in Key Stage 3 science results in 2005; however, standards remain below those of comparable authorities. Standards are also below similar areas in mathematics at Key Stages 2 and 3. However, the rate of improvement in Key Stage 3 mathematics over the last few years is well above that of the local authority's statistical neighbours. Improvement in Key Stage 2 mathematics results is less secure and is similar to the local authority's statistical neighbours. The local authority has recognised weaknesses in mathematics and has good plans to improve attainment in this subject.

The local authority's improving trend of Key Stage 4 results continued in 2005. The percentage of students achieving 5+ A\* - C grades increased by 4.5 percentage points to 47% giving the local authority its best ever results. There has been a 14% increase in results since 1999 compared to a 9% rise in statistical neighbours. However, standards as measured by 5+ A\* - C grades, 1+ A\* - G grades and average points score remain below those of comparable authorities. The overall progress made by pupils between age 11 and 16 improved in 2005 but remains below the expected level.

The local authority knows its schools well and has a clear system of categorisation linked to support. Two schools, both primaries, are currently in a category of concern. This is below the number in the local authority's statistical neighbours. No school has been placed in a category of concern under new section 5 inspection arrangements and one primary school was removed from special measures in November 2005 indicating the effectiveness of local authority support and intervention.

The achievement of look after children at Key Stage 2 and GCSE is above the national average and that of the statistical neighbours. Attendance of looked after children has fallen and is now below the national average and that of comparator authorities. However, the local authority's good tracking data has allowed attendance to be monitored centrally and support provided where required.

Criteria for the deployment of the additional educational needs budget have been developed so that it is less bureaucratic than in previous years. It is pleasing to note that in addition the local authority has effectively reduced the time it takes for statements of special educational need to be issued. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is closely monitored and indicates that they make at least satisfactory progress. The local authority also closely tracks the achievement of black and minority ethnic children and young people.

The local authority has rightly given a high priority to improving attendance. Challenging targets have been set, the collection of statistical data is robust and standardised codes introduced a year early. Rates of attendance have improved over the past three years but they remain just below those of its statistical neighbours at both primary and secondary level. In primary schools, unauthorised absences are above those of comparable authorities. At secondary level authorised absences are well above comparable authorities. The rate of permanent exclusions from primary and secondary schools is lower than the national average. The number of fixed term exclusions remains high; however, the number of days lost through exclusion is falling.

A broad range of recreational, leisure and cultural facilities is available and used well by many children and young people.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The local authority makes a good contribution to outcomes for children and young people in this area. Partnership working is effective in encouraging children and young people to engage in consultation and planning with issues that affect them. For example, there was a successful youth consultation event in October around the Children and Young People's Plan. Almost all schools have school councils with students offering development days to allow others to review practice. Important issues affecting children and young people are raised through the 'Rant Magazine' which is written by young people themselves.

Inspection evidence from children's homes confirms that the service provides a range of ways in which the local authority consults with looked after children such as 'Viewpoint', a computer based consultation package. Young people also confirmed that they were consulted in day to day decisions on all aspects of running the home. The local authority recognises the importance of looked after children making a meaningful contribution to their reviews and has invested in an advocacy service for additional support for these children. This has led to an improvement in the participation of looked after children in their reviews. Further improvement is planned for and needed as performance is still below the average for England and comparator councils. A multi-agency sub group of the Learning Disability Partnership has produced a transition protocol for all agencies. This was carried out in consultation with young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and is having a positive impact on ensuring a smooth transition to adult life.

The local authority recognises that the reduction of anti-social behaviour in children and young people is a major priority for the city. This is being robustly addressed by

the multi-agency Safer Portsmouth Partnership and a community safety strategy. Various agencies are working with young people to provide alternative activities, with all school age offenders in the city having a school placement.

Although the percentage of these children who received final warnings or convictions fell last year, the number remains above the national average and that of comparator councils. The local authority and the young offenders' team are working with a number of identified young people to improve performance on offending through restorative justice initiatives.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

The local authority makes a good contribution to outcomes for children and young people in this area. A major focus of 14–19 education work within the local authority has been to raise the expectations of students and their families and increase the percentage of young people in education, training and employment. Good progress has been made in this area and the number of students transferring to post-16 education courses was at its highest level in 2005. The number of young people in education, training and employment has been increasing in recent years and is now above the national average and broadly similar to that seen in statistical neighbours. Good multi-agency support is given to those young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this ensures that the percentage in employment, education and training is above that in similar areas.

The percentage of 16 year olds achieving 1 + A\* - G GCSE grades or their equivalent rose in 2005. However, the percentage still remains well below that of similar authorities and the national average. This area of work is a continuing priority for the local authority. The range of vocational courses offered to 14-16 year olds by schools and colleges is continuing to develop and improve.

The local authority has worked well with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and other partners to develop the 14-19 strategy. This strategy is impacting on levels of attainment obtained by 16 year olds. Good plans are also in place to open a City Learning College in the centre of Portsmouth in 2007. A principal aim of this college is to extend curriculum provision within the city and further tackle underachievement. The local authority also works well with the local LSC and the Connexions service to ensure that young people have good advice regarding future education and career options.

The number of care leavers in education, employment and training has improved and remains at a very good level. The partnership with the Connexions service ensures that support for young people about to make the transition to further education, employment and training is good and all care leavers have pathway plans. The achievement of care leavers is above that seen in comparable authorities. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities continue to be given effective support in making the transition to adult life and economic well-being.

There has been a recent reduction in the number of childcare providers and places within the local authority. However, provision and demand are effectively monitored at a local level and current provision meets demand. The rollout of children's centres is progressing well and the city is ahead of its target to open seven new centres by 2008. Portsmouth's Children's Information Service is effective in providing up-to-date information to young people. It provides outreach in every children's centre across the city, with Jobcentre Plus providing an outreach programme. Community regeneration is also bringing more services to children and young people to where they are most needed.

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

The local authority provides effective leadership for children's services and its capacity to improve outcomes for children and young people is good. The strategic management team is committed to improvement and sets ambitious and appropriate targets for improvement. However, the local authority needs to increase its rate of improvement of social care outcomes. Local authority members have given a clear priority to children and young people.

The local authority has identified key priorities for improvement through extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including children and young people. These priorities are clearly addressed in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). There is collective ownership of this plan and clear, shared priorities for improvement. Good use is made of joint commissioning and partnership working to improve efficiency and effectiveness of services. Each CYPP priority has an agreed interagency commissioning plan underlining the strong partnership working evident in the local authority. The actions and outcomes of the CYPP are closely monitored. Through this process all agencies are made aware of performance against priorities.

The local authority is committed to providing best value for money. To achieve this, the cost effectiveness of all services is monitored. Overall costs and most unit costs for services for children and young people are similar to the national average but slightly below those of comparator authorities.

The local authority has made very good progress in implementing the requirements of the Change for Children programme and has made good progress in integrating services. The new children services directorate was formally in place from April 2006 although the Director of Children's Services has been in post since April 2005. The local authority is a pathfinder for extended schools and a pilot Children's Trust Authority. By September 2006, all children and young people will have access to full core extended services within each Community Improvement Partnership (CIP) across the city. The creation of children's centres is linked to CIPs within the authority. Children's centres have already been established in four of the five community partnership areas.

## Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active encouragement of children and young people to adopt healthy lifestyles</li> <li>• very good performance in respect of meeting looked after children's health needs</li> <li>• immunisation rates have exceeded targets.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce the numbers of teenage conceptions.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• timeliness of core assessments</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adoptions of looked after children</li> <li>• timeliness of initial assessments</li> <li>• timeliness of reviews, of both looked after children and children on the Child Protection Register</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very good provision for early years</li> <li>• standards of attainment at Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics</li> <li>• achievement of looked after children at Key Stage 2 and GCSE</li> <li>• support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities</li> <li>• support for and intervention in targeted schools.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• levels of absence and fixed term exclusions from primary and secondary schools</li> <li>• levels of absence from school of looked after children</li> <li>• achievement in Key Stages 2 and 3 particularly for mathematics and science</li> <li>• progress made by students from 11 to 16 years of age.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engaging and consulting with all children</li> <li>• multi-agency work around the learning disability partnership</li> <li>• consultation with looked after children within local authority homes.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outcomes in relation to reducing the levels of anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• number of final warnings and convictions for looked after children.</li> <li>• Participation of looked after children in their reviews</li> </ul>



<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training</li> <li>• number of care leavers in education, employment and training and their resulting achievement</li> <li>• all care leavers have pathway plans</li> <li>• the rollout of children's centres and the advice given to children and young people through outreach work</li> <li>• children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given effective support in making the transition to adult life and economic well-being.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high number of young people leaving school with no GCSE or equivalent pass.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear and effective leadership of children's services</li> <li>• a robust CYPP developed through consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including children and young people</li> <li>• strong collaborative working arrangements with a range of parties</li> <li>• excellent progress in developing extended services.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure that support for school improvement leads to continued improvement across Key Stages 2 to 4.</li> </ul>

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

- Impact of strategies to raise achievement at Key Stages 2-4
- Attendance rates in primary and secondary schools
- Effectiveness of actions to increase the number of young people obtaining GCSE grades A\* - G or their equivalent
- Impact of the local authority's strategy for reducing teenage pregnancies
- Effectiveness of actions to improve the timeliness of reviews of looked after children.
- Effectiveness of strategies to reduce anti-social behaviour and the numbers of final warnings and convictions of looked after children.

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 (CPA) 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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