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Mr John Richards
Director of Children's Services
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Dear Mr Richards

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

Peterborough City Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs poorly (1)
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Children's services in Peterborough City Council perform poorly. The decline in performance since the 2009 assessment reflects an inadequate inspection judgment of local arrangements for safeguarding children and young people.

A recent full inspection of safeguarding arrangements reported that not all provision was good enough and as a result some children and young people were left at potential risk. However, the inspection noted that many services were doing the right things and provision for children looked after by the local authority was good.

In the last year there has been an increase in good early years and childcare providers. There is no inadequate primary or secondary school provision and more schools in the last year have been judged to be outstanding in both phases. Three of the 11 schools for secondary age pupils are good and three outstanding. Just over a half of post-16 provision is good or better. Although there are now no inadequate primary schools, which is an improvement on 2009, the number judged to be good or better has reduced slightly over the last year. One inadequate special school is not improving quickly enough. However, the majority of settings for children whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are better. For example all local authority children's homes are good, as are three of the four special schools and the pupil referral unit. The local fostering and adoption agencies are adequate.

National performance measures show almost all outcomes are in line with or above national averages or similar areas. There have been good improvements in the time taken to complete initial and core assessments. Almost all children make the expected progress as they move through primary school. However, although improving over time results in national tests continue to be below average for 11-year-olds with fewer attaining the expected level in both English and mathematics. Attainment continues to be below average for 16-year-olds but there has been good improvement in young people achieving five A* to C grades in GCSE examinations including English and mathematics. Overtime more 19-year-olds are gaining higher qualifications although most recent results have stalled. The number of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training is high.

Key areas for further development

- Improve the overall effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.
- Continue to increase the number of young people at the age of 11 who achieve the nationally expected level in both English and mathematics.
- Continue to raise attainment of 16-year-olds

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are almost always successful. Nearly all childminders, schools and children's homes are good at this. Local services are effective in supporting parents' understanding of healthy lifestyles and there has been a reduction in the number of five-year-olds who are too overweight. However, targets set to reduce obesity in 11-year-olds have not been met. Improvements to services designed to promote sexual health are having a positive impact with good rates of screening for chlamydia, although the numbers of teenage mothers are not reducing as fast as elsewhere. Health provision for children looked after by the local authority is good. Other improvements include higher numbers of mothers who are breast-feeding and more children taking part in the recommended amount of physical education and sport. Fewer 16-year-olds report that they have recently been drunk or taken drugs than elsewhere, a reduction on previous years.

Inspection by Ofsted identified potential risks to some vulnerable children caused by delays in assessments, a shortage of social workers and inconsistency in the way records are kept. However, good practice was also reported, such as the way agencies work in partnership to support families to stay together. Most recent data reflects improvement in the number of core assessments completed within expected timescales and fewer children needing a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time. The services for children looked after by the local authority are good and they are helped to do well. Ofsted inspection reports show the arrangements for keeping children and young people safe in children's centres, nurseries, schools, colleges and children's homes are almost always good. There are good approaches to promoting community relationships and strengths in the arrangements for tackling bullying in schools and the wider community. But, hospital admissions due to accidental or non-accidental injury are high.

Increasing numbers of childcarers, nursery and secondary schools and colleges are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. Levels of attainment are rising quickly for five- and seven-year-olds. Primary schools are good at helping almost all children make the progress they should between the age of seven and 11, although they still do not do as well in national tests as elsewhere. Although more children achieved the expected level in either English or mathematics fewer achieved this for both subjects in the 2010 tests. Standards have risen in secondary schools and 2010 results for 16-year-olds demonstrate good improvement in the numbers achieving five or more higher grade GCSEs. Those with special educational needs do better than their peers elsewhere. Behaviour is good in most secondary schools but permanent exclusions are increasing and higher than national figures. However, the number of secondary age pupils who are often absent from school is lower than in similar areas.

Successful arrangements for involving children and young people in planning and reviewing local services have been in place for a long time. Almost all schools and other settings are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities. Good local initiatives provide opportunities for young people to

become involved in volunteering and the number of young people engaging in positive activities is greater than elsewhere. Local targets for improvement in this area have been exceeded. A local priority focuses on reducing numbers of young people in crime and anti-social behaviour. The rates for re-offending are falling and are lower than found nationally. Although still high, over time the amount of first-time offending is also reducing.

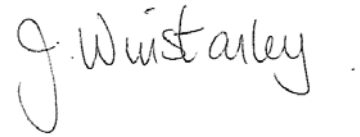
The local authority knows that not all schools are effective in ensuring young people achieve good qualifications by the age of 19. Only just over a half of secondary schools are good in this area and there are more young people not in education, employment or training than elsewhere. This is a key priority for improvement and ambitious targets have been set to ensure all 17-year-olds access education or training by 2013. A recently launched 14-19 Education Plan is designed to address issues in this area. Over time more 19-year-olds are gaining good qualifications but this improvement has been at a slower rate than nationally so young people in Peterborough do not do quite as well as their peers elsewhere. However, the gap between those from low-income families and their peers is not as wide as in similar areas. Local action has been successful in ensuring almost all care leavers and young offenders have decent homes. However, only a half of care leavers are involved in education, training or employment.

Prospects for improvement

Most outcomes for children and young people are improving in Peterborough although not always as quickly as found elsewhere. An inspection by Ofsted in March 2010 identified that the overall effectiveness of local safeguarding services was inadequate. Although many aspects of provision were reported to be good or improving, important historical weaknesses in the referral and assessment service had left a significant number of cases unallocated putting vulnerable children at potential risk of harm. The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board had been insufficiently rigorous in ensuring that actions from serious case reviews were implemented. These serious weaknesses were being addressed by the robust action taken by the Director of Children's Services. Strengths in the leadership and management in other areas such as preventative services and provision for looked after children were also reported. Ofsted monitoring visits shows the local authority is highly effective in helping weaker schools improve. However more needs to be done to raise educational standards further. The review of the Children and Young People's Plan demonstrates the local authority and partners have a good understanding of local strengths and weaknesses. Although the review is not fully evaluative in explaining the impact of actions on outcomes for children and young people it clearly lists the actions to be taken during the next year to achieve further improvements. This includes the introduction of integrated, locality working. Other local plans, informed by inspection and very good analysis of performance data are driving further improvements. Strong ambition, tackling the right priorities and good partnership working is demonstrated through improved health outcomes, multi-agency working in addressing anti-social behaviour and the development of a Child Poverty Strategy.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment