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17 December 2008

Mr John Richards  
Executive Director of Children's Services  
Peterborough City Council  
Floor 2, Bayard Place  
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Peterborough  
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Dear Mr Richards

## **Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Peterborough City 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.

<b>Assessment judgement area</b>	<b>APA grade</b>
Overall effectiveness of children's services	2
Being healthy	2
Staying safe	2
Enjoying and achieving	2
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	2
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	2

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

## Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 2

Peterborough City Council delivers only minimum requirements for users. The management of children's services and the council's capacity to improve are adequate. The council is making satisfactory progress in responding to the recommendations of the APA published in November 2007.

The standards of attainment reached by some children and young people in Peterborough are lower than those in similar councils and nationally because of variability in their progress across the key stages. However, the council has laid secure foundations for improvement. Outcomes for looked after children and young people are good but remain too low for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from the Gypsy/Roma and Travelling community.

The outcomes for being healthy, enjoying and achieving and economic well-being continue to be adequate. Effective strategies have been implemented to ensure that children and young people feel safe from bullying; the number of schools participating in and achieving Healthy Schools status is high. Improvements in provision are gradually reducing the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment and training. The council has sustained good services that have a significant impact on outcomes, enabling children and young people to make a positive contribution in the community. Overall the leadership of the council, working together with key partners, have taken appropriate and timely actions to address most areas of development identified in the 2006 joint area review (JAR) and the 2007 APA but it is too soon to see the full impact of strategies to bring about improvements.

## Being healthy

Grade 2

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

### Major strengths

- Good performance on the health assessments of looked after children. The proportion of looked after children receiving a dental and annual health check has increased and at 92%, is higher than similar councils and the England average.
- Good partnership with schools in promoting healthy lifestyles; 59 of the 73 schools have achieved Healthy School status with almost all schools participating, which is well ahead of target.
- There is good access to child and adolescent mental health services by vulnerable groups.

<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The rate of teenage conceptions remains higher than that of similar councils and the national average.</li> <li>▪ The prevalence of obesity amongst children and young people is higher than the national average.</li> <li>▪ A low proportion of young people are accessing specialist substance misuse services.</li> </ul> |
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## Staying safe

**Grade 2**

Current information indicates that the council has made progress in the area of staying safe. This is in line with the council's self-assessment. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good reduction in the numbers of children who have been killed or seriously injured on the roads when compared with the England average.</li> <li>▪ All children who are the subject of a child protection plan are allocated to a qualified social worker and all are reviewed on time.</li> <li>▪ The proportion of looked after children who have been adopted is higher than that of similar councils and the national average.</li> <li>▪ The proportion of looked after children who were reviewed on time exceeded that of similar councils and the national average.</li> </ul> |
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<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The rate of social care referrals and re-referrals is higher than that in similar councils and the national average.</li> <li>▪ Performance on the timeliness of initial and core assessments remains below that of similar councils and the national average.</li> <li>▪ The proportion of looked after children remains higher than that of similar councils and the national average.</li> </ul> |
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## Enjoying and achieving

**Grade 2**

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

### Major strengths

- Good analysis and use of Early Years Foundation Stage data is leading to improving standards of achievement in childcare and education settings. The proportion of childcare settings and nursery education classes receiving a good grading in inspections has risen by 4% and 23% respectively.
- At Key Stage 2 outcomes continue to improve. Targeted work with schools has led to steady improvement. For example, there are gains in all subjects at Level 4 with mathematics and science results rising above similar councils.
- The proportions of looked after children and young people leaving care with five or more GCSEs are well above similar councils and national comparators.

### Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The standards children reach in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 are well below those in similar councils and the national figures.
- Progress is too variable in Key Stages 1 and 3 resulting in a series of peaks and troughs in children and young people's attainment.
- Outcomes for some vulnerable groups such as children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; Gypsy/Roma and Travellers are below national comparators.

## Making a positive contribution

**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

- Children and young people, including the most vulnerable, make a valuable contribution in shaping the future of services in Peterborough. For example, their elected representatives on the Youth Council inform and influence Cabinet policy and decision-making.
- Successful action is taken to identify children and young people at risk of participating in anti-social behaviour and to reduce numbers of those already involved. Partnership work in supporting young offenders is very effective resulting in a significant reduction in the rate of recidivism and rising numbers of young offenders involved in education, training and employment.
- Looked after children and young people play a full part in making decisions about their future and are listened to. For example, 'Viewpoint' enables looked after children to record their views of their care plans. Councillors meet with children and young people regularly to ensure their views are heard.

<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insufficient access to specialist services and out-of-school activities for some vulnerable children and young people, especially those who are hard-to-reach such as young carers.</li> </ul> |
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## Achieving economic well-being

**Grade 2**

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

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Year-on-year improvement in the participation rate of 17-year-olds in education and training which is now closer to the national average.</li> <li>▪ Good advice and support for looked after children and care leavers, through pathway plans and personal advisors, leading to very good rates of entry to education, employment and training.</li> <li>▪ Good improvements in the standard of housing and support for care leavers and other vulnerable young people. For example, the proportion of care leavers living in suitable accommodation has improved significantly and is now above that of similar councils and the England average.</li> </ul> |
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<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and young parents who are not in education, training and employment is too high.</li> <li>▪ The proportions of post-16 young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications, at 64.2% and 38.6% respectively, are below those of similar councils.</li> </ul> |
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## Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services

**Grade 2**

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is adequate. The council and its partners are displaying increasingly effective leadership and have a shared vision of what they want to achieve that is clearly set out in the Children and Young People's Plan. The council's ambitions are clear and realistic and are communicated to stakeholders. Needs analysis has been carried out in some aspects and is underway in others. There is a good level of engagement with local communities.

Priorities are realistic and based on an accurate evaluation and draw on the JAR and previous APA. The city's diverse communities' needs are incorporated. There are a number of strategies and plans in place, but several outcomes remain below that of comparable authorities and the national average. There has been a shift in resources and emphasis to preventative services, but these have started from a low base.

Capacity has improved by means of an investment in 19 new social care posts, including additional team managers. Steps have been taken to strengthen the use of partnerships, but these are at a relatively early stage of development.

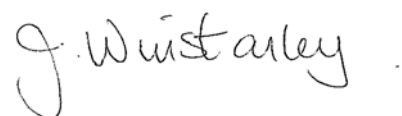
A comprehensive performance management programme has recently been introduced, and this is beginning to improve performance and budgetary planning.

<b>Major strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The council and its partners have a clear vision and a realistic set of priorities.</li><li>▪ A performance management system is in place and is beginning to improve performance and budgetary planning.</li></ul>
<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Despite the implementation of several strategies and plans, many outcomes remain below those of similar councils and national averages.</li><li>▪ Progress towards joint commissioning and pooled budgets is relatively slow.</li><li>▪ Although gross expenditure on family support has increased, it remains at a lower proportion of the total budget than in comparable authorities.</li></ul>

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