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Making Social Care  
Better for People



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**1 November 2006**

Dear Ms Baldwin

**2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OLDHAM METROPOLITAN 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 <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	2
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

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council delivers at least minimum requirements for children and young people. The majority of services demonstrate how they are improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people. The council has made some good progress in addressing several of the areas for improvement identified in the previous APA. For example, there have been improvements in the overall outcomes for the health of children and young people, 14–19 partnership working, consultation and involvement with young people, and the timeliness of placing children for adoption. Further work is still needed to ensure that all children and young people in the borough remain safe and attain their full potential in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people. The contribution of the local authority's social care services is adequate. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) contains a thorough needs analysis and demonstrates that the council has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Improvements to workforce planning and the establishment of a university college in the borough, along with the progress made since the previous APA, confirm that the council has good capacity to improve its services further.

## **Being healthy**

The council makes a good contribution towards improving the health of children and young people. Continued progress is observed in some areas but further improvements are required in others.

Teenage pregnancy rates amongst 15–17 year olds has increased in 2004/05 from 55 per 1,000 to 60.3 and this is higher than comparator and England averages. The council recognises this is an area for improvement and has developed an action plan to target those wards where conception rates are the highest. Advice on sexual health and contraception are available in a range of settings. At birth, all children receive a comprehensive health assessment and new parents are provided with health promotion advice within one month of the child's birth.

The council has developed a partnership approach for the implementation of the Healthy Schools programme. All schools have taken up the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme. The council is on target for a total of 50% of all schools to achieve Healthy School Status by December 2006.

To develop healthy lifestyles, physical activity and community cohesion, there are a number of established borough-wide partnership initiatives. For example, the Unity Sport After School Programme which last year brought together 1,350 children and young people from different cultures and backgrounds. The Health 4 Me website, designed by young people in Oldham, provides an alternative source of healthy lifestyle information.

The council ensures that the overall provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is good. Protocols and plans are now in place for 16 and 17 year olds to receive CAMHS relevant to their age. A dedicated mental health specialist school health advisor provides a broader consultative role for schools and staff in relation to mental health issues and also holds a therapeutic caseload linked into the CAMHS. The number of health assessments for looked after children completed with statutory timescales has

dropped from 61% in 2004/05 to 59% in 2005/06. This is significantly below the comparator (79%) and England average (83). The council has further work to undertake in this area before performance is maintained above a satisfactory level.

## **Staying safe**

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improve outcomes in this area is adequate. There still remain some significant areas for improvement. For example, the timeliness of the completion of initial and core assessments and the overall safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable children.

There has been an 11% drop in the number of referrals for children's social care services and a 17% drop in the number of referrals that lead to an initial assessment. There has been an increase in the number of repeat referrals in 2005/06 (32.3%) compared with 2004/05 (23%). This is above comparator (24) and the England average (21.3). Whilst a significant increase in the number of initial assessments completed within seven days (29.0% in 2004/05 to 51.3% in 2005/06) has been achieved, this remains below comparator (70.5%) and the England average (66.5%). A slight improvement in the percentage of core assessments completed within 35 days has taken place (56% in 2005/06 up from 52% in 2004/05); this figure is below comparators and England averages (74). The council is aware that further improvements are required to reduce the number of repeat referrals and have put systems in place to ensure that resources are used more effectively.

Parents and carers are provided with a good range of information to promote the safety of children and young people. The council has developed a number of other initiatives such as the Crucial Crew project to raise awareness of home safety issues and how children and young people should deal with emergencies. Anti-bullying policies and systems to support schools are in place in addressing all aspects of bullying.

The council has robust processes to support Children Missing from Education. Partnership working across schools and other agencies has improved the awareness of child movements across the borough.

There has been a reduction in the rate at which children are placed on the Child Protection Register (16 in 2005/06 in contrast to 20 in 2004/05) along with an increase in the rates of de-registration, (30.9 in 2005/06 compared with 27.9 in 2004/05). All children registered are reviewed within timescales. The performance on reviews has been sustained for the previous two years. Performance on the number of looked after children adopted within 12 months of the decision being made remains good. The number of looked after children placed in residential care, foster care or adopted is an area where the council has performed better than planned. It is higher than the England average. Whilst the proportion of looked after children adopted has increased slightly this year (5% in 2005/06 compared to 4.9% in 2004/05), the performance in this area has not improved at the rate planned by the council.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The overall contribution the council makes to ensure young people achieve well at school and enjoy their education and leisure activities is adequate. The overall quality and provision of nursery education is satisfactory or better. Test results for 2005 show that standards of attainment across Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 are adequate and broadly in line with those of statistical neighbours. However, with the exception of Key Stage 2 mathematics and the proportion of young people who achieve five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE they remain below national averages. Standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 are inadequate and are below those of both comparable councils and national rates. Through its school improvement service the council has introduced some new initiatives and strategies to address this area of concern. It is too early to see the benefit or impact of these actions on children's performance.

There has been some good progress in raising standards, the most notable being the increase in the proportion of young people obtaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, which rose from 46.03% in 2004 to 52.25% in 2005. Similarly, in science at Key Stage 3 the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or higher rose from 58.75% in 2004 to 64.92% in 2005. Nevertheless, the overall picture of schools' progress and added value across the borough show that a significant number of schools remain below the national average.

Attendance rates in primary and secondary schools are close to those of comparable councils and nationally. A fall in overall unauthorised absence has been sustained over three years to 0.75% and is now just under the national average of 0.79%. Authorised absence rates in primary schools are in line with statistical neighbours and above those nationally. In secondary schools they are above statistical neighbours and national rates. The performance and attendance of looked after children is below average. However, the council has appointed two learning mentors to target improving the attainment of looked after children. Additionally, a dowry of £750 is attached to each looked after child in secondary schools to enable additional support towards attainment and achievement. Social Access, a programme for looked after children ran from January to December 2005. Thirty nine young people engaged on the course, with twenty four achieving at least one basic skills unit qualification at a higher level than their entry point. In addition, four young people achieved full basic skills qualifications.

The partnership between the local authority and its schools and the support for school improvement are embedded. The authority has a rigorous system in place for monitoring schools, identifying those causing concern and targeting support. There is a clear priority and focus on school improvement and raising standards across all schools.

## **Making a positive contribution**

The contribution the council makes to improving outcomes in this area is good, and progress in aspects of the work since the previous APA in 2005 has continued. The concern over the proportion of looked after children who offend has been addressed and data show that final warnings and convictions have reduced from 3.2% to 2.5%. This

represents good progress and places Oldham as one of the top performers in reducing offending by looked after children.

There is good partnership working between a range of services including police, youth service and the community safety unit to reduce the incidences of anti-social behaviour and youth nuisance. Oldham has a wide range of early engagement and diversionary programmes. For example, Kickstart provides formal accredited programmes designed to engage young people who are at risk of offending. Over 400 young people attended this provision in the last year of which 75% either continued within education or found employment.

The council continues to place a high priority on developing community cohesion and on reducing levels of deprivation across the borough. The positive findings from the Cattle inquiry stated that, 'few cities, towns and districts in other parts have done as much as Oldham in seeking to build community cohesion'. It also acknowledged the effort, thought and resources invested by Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, the Oldham Partnership and other stakeholders in responding to the many challenges identified in reports on the causes of the disturbances that took place in Oldham in 2001. The number of racist incidents reported by schools and partners is higher than the last academic year. However, there has been a 30% reduction in the numbers of those considered serious enough for reporting to police for further investigation.

Children's and young people's involvement in the processes of consultation, feedback and decision making are developing well. They are represented through the youth council, area youth committees and are also included on several adult committees. The council has recently involved children and young people in two needs analysis exercises. These were aimed at identifying their needs and possible solutions in relation to the five Every Child Matters outcomes. This is a good example of how Oldham involves young people from all communities and vulnerable groups in consultation and decision making. One area for improvement is to ensure that looked after children are more involved in their own reviews. This has dropped significantly in 2005/06 (64%) from 92% in 2004/05. This compares with an England average of 82.7% of looked after children who in 2005/06 had involvement in their own reviews.

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

The contribution the council makes to improve outcomes in this area is good. The council has made effective progress in developing the 14–19 Strategy in partnership with the local Learning and Skills Council and key partners. The 14–19 provision has been established in response to an annual audit of all pupil, school and community needs through meetings of a 14–19 collaborative partnership group. The well established local Learning Partnership meets regularly to review progress against the 14–19 Strategy and areas for action. An on-line 14–19 District Opportunity prospectus is under development and is on track to be launched in September 2006. The on-line Progress File continues to expand with Oldham leading a regional collaborative. A collaborative curriculum delivers external provision to 500 pupils from across 15 secondary schools and includes provision by: further education, city learning centres, schools and work-based learning providers. There has been a major

increase in school internal vocational curriculum provision at Level 1 and 2 supported by curriculum deputies and 14–19 networks.

The number of 16–18 year olds not in education, employment or training at 7.4% is the second lowest in Greater Manchester. This is a strength and the Local Area Agreements (LAA) target has been agreed to reduce the 16–18 not in education, employment or training rate further to 5.8% by 2008/09. Similarly, the number in education, employment or training at 89.8% is slightly higher than the average of 88.2% for Greater Manchester. The percentage of teenage parents in education, employment or training is currently 46.3% with an LAA target of 50% by 2008/09. This is well above the current Greater Manchester average of 35.7%. At 86%, the council continues to achieve good rates of young offenders not in education, employment or training. The youth offending teams and Connexions are working collaboratively to improve the rate further.

The council has worked hard to ensure that enterprise education and work-related learning are developed and embedded in the curriculum for all 13–19 year olds. A full time enterprise coordinator has been appointed, secondary schools are appointing their own coordinators and a commonly shared understanding of enterprise education is developing. The council continues to promote vocational courses as part of a flexible curriculum for 14–19 year olds. Those students who completed Key Stage 4 vocational courses at a local college in 2005 had learning participation rates of 92%, compared with the borough average of 88% for all Year 11 leavers. Similarly the not in education, employment or training rate for this cohort was only 3.6% compared with a borough average of 6.9%.

The overall entry rate to higher education (HE) is below national and regional averages and the entry into post-16 education by young Asian women is a concern for the council.

The Junior University and Aimhigher programmes, funded by neighbourhood renewal and which target potential HE entrants from non traditional backgrounds, have had some influence on progression and retention in post-16 learning. The council has recently been granted approval for the establishment of a university centre within the town.

The council is on track to meet its target in relation to the numbers of families with young people with disabilities accessing direct payments. Welfare benefits services are proactively working with young people with disabilities at the point of transition to ensure they are taking up their eligibility for benefits. Five per cent of young people with disabilities who are not looked after receive services from the council. This is slightly below comparator (6%) and the England average (6%).

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

The council continues to have strong ambitions and has a clear vision for the future delivery of services for children and young people. These ambitions and vision are set out well in the Community Strategy and the CYPP. Both of these plans are of good quality. Service improvement plans set out specific actions and resource requirements that are needed to progress service delivery.

New management structures have been in place since March 2006. The recent refinement and restructuring of the leadership and management team has begun to improve the integration of children’s services. Service managers have more clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

The council’s medium term financial strategy is designed to ensure resources are directed towards priorities and areas of need. For example, resources have been refocused to support the return of looked after children from most of the out-of-borough placements to enable reinvestment of savings in the quality of local provision.

Performance management and quality assurance systems have improved and are better used to inform the council about important aspects of service delivery. Last year’s APA indicated the need to increase the pace of change in improving children’s services. Some good progress has been made in relation to several of the Every Child Matters outcomes. The council has introduced a number of initiatives to deal with areas of concern. Although many of these are developing well, they have not had time to impact fully on outcomes for children and young people. Overall the council has good capacity to further improve its services for children and young people.

**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>• health assessment and health promotion advice provided to all parents within one month of new births</li> <li>• strong partnership working with CAMHS</li> <li>• Healthy Schools program.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teenage pregnancy rates amongst 15–17 year olds</li> <li>• attendance at dental health assessments of looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• processes for monitoring Children Missing from Education</li> <li>• reviews of children on the Child Protection Register</li> <li>• reduced number of looked after children placed in residential care.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completion of core and initial assessments within timescales</li> <li>• further improvements to the rates of looked after children adopted.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the overall quality of nursery education provision is satisfactory or better</li> <li>the increase in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades</li> <li>the partnership between schools and the local authority and support for school improvement.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>standards and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1</li> <li>added value measures Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4</li> <li>performance and attendance of looked after children</li> <li>authorised absence in secondary schools.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the work carried out in building community cohesion</li> <li>the involvement of young people in consultation processes</li> <li>the partnerships between various services to reduce the amount of youth nuisance and anti-social behaviour</li> <li>the low percentage of final warning/reprimands and convictions of looked after children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the percentage of looked after children who participate in their reviews.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the positive rates for 16–18 year olds in education, employment or training</li> <li>the positive impact of Key Stage 4 vocational courses on participation rates</li> <li>14–19 Strategy and partnership working</li> <li>percentage of teenage parents in education, employment or training.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>entry rates into HE</li> <li>entry into post-16 education by young Asian women.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>quality of strategic planning</li> <li>leadership and management of children's services</li> <li>council's medium term financial strategy.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p>



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

### *Being healthy*

- Reducing teenage pregnancies for 15–17 year olds.
- Attendance at dental health assessments of looked after children.

### *Staying safe*

- Completion of core and initial assessments within timescales.
- Rates of looked after children adopted.

### *Enjoying and achieving*

- Standards and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1.
- Added value measures – Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.
- Performance and attendance of looked after children.
- Authorised absence in secondary schools.

### *Making a positive contribution*

- The percentage of looked after children who participate in their reviews.

### *Achieving economic well-being*

- Entry rates into HE.
- Entry into post-16 education by young Asian women.

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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