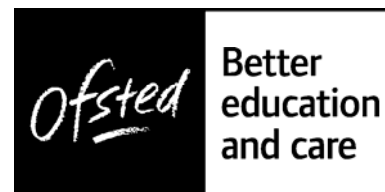


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Edwina Grant - Corporate Director of Education and
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1 December 2005

Dear Ms Grant

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 25 July 2005 to assess the performance of education and social care services within your 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.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are generally satisfactory. While progress is being made on reducing teenage pregnancies, the level in both under 16's and under 18's is still considerably higher than the national average. Three per cent of the 29 primary schools inspected were deemed unsatisfactory in participation in sport. In engaging schools in the 'Healthy Schools' programme, 83% of schools are participating but only in individual strands. The level of involvement needs to improve. With this in mind, the council has started to offer intensive support to target and engage specific schools in further strands, and is beginning to provide city wide training for all schools. The impact of these initiatives has yet to be realised.

The Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) is involved in early identification and interventions, targeting vulnerable groups. A named worker, trained in substance misuse, is working with Looked after Children (LAC) in order to increase access to screening which was a difficulty previously.

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) represents an area of strength for the council with staff providing training and surgeries for foster carers, post adoption therapeutic services and training and support to parents. Youth Offending Team (YOT) referrals to CAMHS are 100%, significantly exceeding the

national figures. However the YOT reports that while assessments have improved the access to treatment services from CAMHS is patchy.

The health of looked after children was an area for improvement noted in last year's assessment, when a marked drop in performance had been noted. The outturn figures are below those of last year, with a specific problem being registration with dentists. The Council were aware of this difficulty and had alerted the BRM to this earlier in the year. The council now has arrangements in place to improve this situation in partnership with the PCT which has the primary responsibility to take remedial action: the impact has still to be evidenced.

A low number of children's homes met the standard in relation to good health and well-being and no homes met the standard on medication.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are mixed. Three per cent of the 29 primary schools inspected were judged as unsatisfactory in relation to pupils' care, welfare health and safety, while no children's homes met the standard on vetting staff and visitors. The fostering agency did not meet the standard in relation to suitability to work with children. Action plans are in place to address these areas.

The Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) has processes in place regarding complaints about staff in any organisation. This includes those known to the police for domestic violence. Training has been provided to all staff working with children and an ongoing campaign is in place to promote awareness of protection issues. Appropriate literature is in place to increase the public awareness of protection.

Numbers on the child protection register have reduced and are in line with similar authorities. All children on the register are allocated to a social worker. Registrations have remained stable but re-registrations have increased from 10% to 17%, representing a 71% increase and prompting an audit of the process, which the council has put in place. They report that, while the percentage increase is significant, the number of families involved is small. De-registrations remain stable but all are higher than comparators. Reviews, within timescales, of young people on the register have improved. These are a key element in delivering child protection plans.

Having performed consistently well above comparators in the previous three years, current performance in initial assessments within seven days fell from 60% to 31.5%. Core assessments of Children in Need, however, have continued to increase and are double the comparator levels. Core assessments within 35 days increased significantly although these are still below comparators. The council has focused on core assessments, seeing these as essential. They have completed a review of the central

duty team in respect of initial assessments and new referrals, and intend to implement improved processes later in the year.

Protocols are in place regarding missing children with joint work being undertaken with NSPCC and the police. A joint Travellers Team and Asylum Seeker Team offer targeted approaches, linking to safeguarding teams and specialist services. In 2004, 37 children were identified who were not, and now are, engaged in education.

Numbers of LAC reduced by 10% and stability of placements for looked after children remains very good. The number of LAC with a named social worker has dropped by 8% with a small number of LAC allocated a Family Support Worker. The Family Support Workers are supervised by qualified staff.

Fostering and adoption is variable with placements of younger children (LAC Under 10) a strength. Overall, however LAC in foster placements has fallen slightly. Adoption of LAC is higher than comparators but placements within 12 months of the child's best interest decision is lower than comparators.

Up to 75% of children and young people 14+ with disabilities had a transition plan and the council is developing new protocols to ensure smooth transition from children's to adult services.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. Within the Early Years Profile information, the overall quality of early years provision is assessed as generally better than the national average although some out-of-school and crèche providers do require additional support to meet the standards expected. Additional pre-registration support for childminders is also necessary to ensure that they are adequately prepared for registration. The provision of early years education is good in relation to full day care and enables children to progress effectively towards early learning goals. Sessional day care provision, however, although limited in number, does not provide the same degree of support and needs to improve. Although Key Stages of learning remain below statistical comparators and national averages the rate of improvement has been significant in Key Stages 2 and 3. At Key Stage 2, for example, there has been good improvement in all 3-core subjects with the biggest change in English and in Key Stage 3 strong progress has been made most significantly in Maths and English. Results at Key Stage 1, however, are inconsistent and concerning with a degree of stagnation in reading and a decline in writing achievement. The support provided by the council in implementing the national literacy strategy has therefore not focused sufficiently on this aspect of education. There has, nevertheless been an additional increase in achievement in mathematics at this Key Stage.

Good progress at GCSE in respect of the percentage achieving five or more A*-C grades has resulted in the authority moving much closer to the national figures although the performance relating to those achieving more than one A*-G remains low. In addition, the value added measures for the transition stages between KS2 and KS4 together with KS2 and KS3 highlight the fact that pupils continue to make poorer progress than the national average. Although the achievement of care leavers remains better than the national average, this has declined marginally more recently. The council has explored the reasons for this trend and explains this satisfactorily by highlighting both the reducing numbers of children in care and to the criteria for the collation of data. The council has recognised the underperformance of black and mixed race boys and has employed a Black Achievement Adviser to deliver an improvement strategy.

Progress has been made on reducing permanent exclusions but the rates are still higher than statistical comparators and the national average and there remains insufficient alternative provision. The council has recognised this and subsequently increased the capacity of pupil referral units. Exclusions remain higher in secondary schools but the overall reintegration rate is good. The council has also made good progress in reducing the number of looked after children absent from school.

Support for schools placed in formal categories of concern by Ofsted is particularly effective. There is currently only one primary school which has been identified as having serious weaknesses with five (three primary and two secondary) schools having been removed from a category within the past year. This is a significant achievement for the council.

There is evidence of good outcomes in terms of inclusive access to recreational and voluntary learning provision, particularly in relation to reading, sport, music and theatre. Strategic working between the youth service and education needs to be more adequately demonstrated. Partnership working, however, between the Youth Service, Connexions and Positive Actions for Young People has helped to extend learning, support personal development and achieve accreditation.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. Children and young people are given adequate support in managing changes in their lives. There is good engagement and participation of children and young people with principal examples including the youth elections, the youth council, the executive forum, primary parliaments and work with Connexions. There is some evidence of positive outcomes although the council recognises the need to further promote a corporate strategy in relation to this area. The council provides a good level of support to gifted and talented pupils. All judgements from school inspections in relation to spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development are satisfactory or better. This is replicated in relation to bullying, racism and other forms of harassment.

A high proportion of looked after children have attended and contributed to their own reviews while a number are also said to be involved in aspects of the running of their own homes. The council has a range of strategies to engage and involve children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Further efforts need to be made to ensure that outcomes are adequately evaluated.

There has been a lack of consistent and sustained progress in relation to reducing the rate of re-offending. Continuing to improve the number of supervised young offenders in education, training or employment is recognised and appropriately seen as a priority by the council.

Achieving economic well-being

The outcomes in this area are satisfactory. There is, nevertheless, insufficient evidence in relation to areas of strength with many initiatives being at an early stage. Whilst there has been an overall increase in childcare places, this has been slower than the national trend and the increase itself predominantly relates to childminders. The council satisfactorily relates this to demographics and locally identified needs.

The council has a comprehensive strategy in place for dealing with the problem of surplus places in schools. There is satisfactory support for the 14 to 19 age group and the achievement of sixth forms has increased to a level above statistical comparators although this remains below national figures.

The council is developing vocational pathways and engaging with employers while also demonstrating strong links with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

The percentage of care leavers at age 19 in education, training or employment is low although the council's internal records suggest a higher number. Work is consequently under way to improve the integrity of the data in this respect. Strong strategic planning exists for care leavers and the work of the Leaving Care team is beginning to have an impact.

Effective support is now being provided in relation to the transition into adulthood for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Although direct payments have increased for families who have children with disabilities, these still remain much lower than comparators.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective Children and Adolescent mental Health Services (CAMHS) • Youth Offending Team timescales for referrals to CAMHS. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce teenage pregnancies • health of looked after children • processes within children’s homes in standards about health • engagement of schools in Healthy Schools Initiative.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stability of Placements • under 10’s in foster placements • young children LAC in foster placements or placed for adoption • core assessments of children in need have increased. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase initial assessments within 7 days • re-referrals of children on the child protection register • re-registrations and de-registrations of children on the child protection register • LAC in foster placements or placed for adoption • the overall position of LAC in foster placements or placed for adoption.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the overall quality of early years provision is good • support for schools in Ofsted categories of concern is effective • inclusive access to recreational and voluntary learning provision is good • support for the school attendance of looked after children has had a positive impact. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve pre-registration support for childminders • increase support for reading and writing at Key Stage 1 • improve the number of children gaining one or more GCSE.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are good examples of engagement and participation of children and young people • a number of strategies engage and involve children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities • good support is provided to gifted and talented pupils. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve progress in reducing the rate of re-offending • increase the number of supervised young offenders in education, training or employment.

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the level of strategic planning is strong • good support is provided for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce surplus places in schools • improve the integrity of data in relation to care leavers in education, training or employment.
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Service Management

The council has worked with partners to set priorities for services to children and young people and aims to establish mainstream partnership working in the future rather than have specialist themes. There is strong members' commitment for corporate parenting and the council is working positively towards integrated services. An ambitious organisational change programme is being implemented, focusing managers and staff on improvement and strengthening management capacity. Good progress was noted at the Priorities Conversation (17 March 2005) when the council's approach to the Change for Children agenda was reviewed.

Management of sickness absence has been a strength, but recruitment and retention in both education and social care appear to be areas requiring improvement. Recruitment and retention in social care gained ground in the year. A policy of allocating cases to family support workers under the supervision of qualified Social Workers has been a means of utilising scarce skills and managing responsibilities for children and families in the system.

Performance management is an area for development and this is acknowledged in the strategic plan. Integrity of data was a recurring theme throughout the assessment. The council, however, has been able to identify weaknesses and has given reasonable indications of identification of need. This is in the context of acknowledged issues about data relating to different time spans and being superseded by current contextual analysis.

Regulated services in social care require improvement with inspections of children's homes evidencing weaknesses in meeting the National Minimum Standards.

There are a number of developments and strategies in place but these are at early stages and have yet to evidence impact. The council will need to be in a position to evidence progress, outcomes and achievements by the time of the Joint Area Review.

The Council's Strategic Plan and Statement of Accountability set clear, challenging ambitions. The Corporate Director of Social Services and Health and the Corporate Director of Education and Children's Strategy are driving this agenda forward. The council has promising capacity for improvement.

Areas for exploration in the Joint Area Review

Being healthy

Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people:

- High levels of infant mortality and sudden infant death syndrome
- Teenage pregnancies
- 'Healthy Schools' engagement and impact.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- Impact of recruitment/retention of qualified social workers.

Enjoying and achieving

Early years provision promotes children's development and well-being and helps them meet early learning goals:

- The nature of early years stock and whether it meets identified needs
- Support for early years provision.

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- The low levels of attainment relative to statistical neighbours.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:

- Analysis of outcomes from strategies – participation and engagement, ETE strategy, support for pupils with talents in sports and the arts.
- Impact of participation by and consultation with young people.

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a co-ordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- Reduction of surplus school places.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve economic well-being:

- Direct payments for children with disabilities.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



Flo Hadley

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



Jonathan Phillips

Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Nottingham City Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	2
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	2
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 capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

1

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