

9 December 2009

Mr Anthony May  
Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services  
Nottinghamshire County Council  
County Hall  
West Bridgford  
Nottingham  
Nottinghamshire  
NG2 7QP

Dear Mr May

## Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating 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, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

## Children's services rating 2009

<b>Children's services rating</b>	<b>Performs adequately (2)</b>
-----------------------------------	--------------------------------

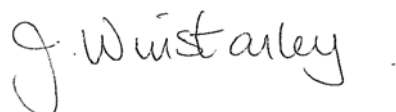
Children's services in Nottinghamshire County Council perform adequately.

The overall effectiveness of a large majority of inspected services and settings is good. However, the recent unannounced visit of contact, referral and assessment arrangements noted areas for priority action which are of sufficient concern that the safety of children cannot be assured. The joint area review undertaken in 2008 highlighted good provision for safeguarding, looked after children and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The more recent visit has found that the response to child protection referrals does not meet statutory guidance and core and initial assessments are not always carried out well or within the expected timescales. These weaknesses have played a pivotal role in determining the children's service rating.

Most nursery schools, childminders and childcare settings are judged good or better. An above average proportion of primary schools are good or better when compared with similar areas and nationally. Secondary education is more variable with a lower proportion of secondary schools judged to be good than elsewhere. All local college provision is adequate or better. Provision for those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable is almost always good in special schools and adequate in the pupil referral unit. Provision in social care settings including almost all children's homes, the local authority adoption agency and private fostering is good. The most recent fostering agency inspection judged this service to be adequate.

Performance against a large majority of national indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS), including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with similar areas and national figures, with little that is better than average. Overall achievement at age 16 is not as good as found in similar authorities or nationally. Young people from most minority ethnic groups achieve better than their peers and do as well as pupils from similar backgrounds in other local authorities at the age of 16. However, the educational attainment of looked after children at both ages 11 and 16 is low. There are strengths in local provision for young offenders.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall



Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, CAA