

9 December 2009

Ms Cynthia Welbourn
Corporate Director of Children's Services
North Yorkshire County Council
County Hall
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 8AE

Dear Ms Welbourn

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

Children's services rating	Performs Well (3)
-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Children's services in North Yorkshire County Council perform well.

Outcomes for the majority of children and young people are good because the overall effectiveness of the large majority of schools and settings is good and sometimes outstanding. The provision for very young children is good and the proportion of good or better childcare is greater than in similar areas and the national average. The majority of the 68 nursery schools are good. A greater than average proportion of both primary and secondary schools is good or outstanding. There are no inadequate primary schools and a smaller proportion of secondary schools are inadequate than nationally or in similar areas. All of the local authority's six children's homes are good and the two pupil referral units are outstanding. The 11 special schools are good or outstanding. The local authority's fostering and adoption services are satisfactory overall but the arrangements for private fostering are inadequate.

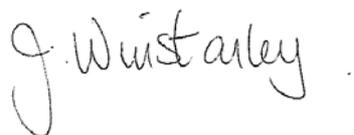
The most recent inspection of the contact, referral and assessment services identified two areas for priority action: the weakness in the capacity of frontline services to provide assessments of children in need within acceptable timescales, and a weakness in the process for responding to and investigating child protection referrals. A recent inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services provides evidence that the authority is tackling these weaknesses and improving their processes. There has been one serious case review in this period which was adequate.

Performance against a very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, are at least in line or above the performance of similar areas. In particular, the performance on stability of placements for looked after children is good. Achievement at the foundation level, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 is above the standards achieved nationally.

Outcomes for some children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable are not quite as good. At Key Stage 2 some children from the Asian community perform below the national average and similar areas, while at Key Stage 4 young people in receipt of free school meals achieve less well than the majority of young people.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA