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Mr Steve Rutland
Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Learning
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Dear Mr Rutland

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment 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, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

North Tyneside Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in North Tyneside Council perform excellently.

In 2009 children's services in North Tyneside were judged to be performing well. Since then, improvement has been significant enough to meet the requirement for performing excellently. The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. In particular, both pupil referral units are at least good, all children's homes are good and much of the provision in special, secondary and primary schools is good or better. One secondary school has weaknesses but the local authority's well-targeted support is being successful and the school is making satisfactory progress. Post-16 provision is more adequate than good because three of the nine sixth forms in schools and the general college of further education are only satisfactory. The local adoption agency is good and the fostering agency is outstanding.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found much that was strong and no areas for priority action. Private fostering arrangements are good.

National performance measures show that the very large majority of outcomes are at least in line with the averages for England or for similar areas. Pupils at ages 11 and 16 do as well as those in similar areas. Results for children from low-income families are improving; however, not sufficiently quickly at age 16 and, at that age, educational outcomes for them are below those for similar young people in similar areas. This is also the case for young people with special educational needs who do less well at the age of 16 than others of the same age nationally. Behaviour in school is good and attendance is higher than in similar areas. More 19-year-olds, including those from low-income families, gain good qualifications. Almost all young offenders are in education, work or training but too many young people re-offend. The number of 16- to 18-year-olds not in work, education or training matches similar areas.

Key areas for further development

- Improve outcomes at age 16 for young people who have special educational needs and those from low-income families.
- Reduce the number of young people who re-offend.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are almost always successful. Improvement is particularly noticeable in the increasing number of mothers who breast-feed, the good reduction in the number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant and the increase in the number

of children and young people who regularly take part in sport. The effectiveness of mental health services requires improvement to ensure that the full range of services is provided. All children's homes and nearly all childminders and schools promote healthy lifestyles well.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are good. Ofsted's inspections rate schools and other settings highly for this outcome. The special schools, the pupil referrals units and the four children's homes are particularly good. The inspection of front-line child protection services reported that good policies and procedures assist staff well in their work and risks to children are managed effectively. All cases are allocated to suitably qualified and experienced social workers. Latest social care data show that good performance is being maintained and there has been some success in ensuring that children in care do not move placement too often. Young people feel safer within the community and fewer say that they have experienced bullying. The number of children who are admitted to hospital because they are injured either accidentally or deliberately, although reduced, remains above average.

Child carers and primary, special and secondary schools are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. The local authority helps all schools raise standards and significant investments in education have been successful, particularly in improving overall results at GCSE and helping weaker schools get better through the local authority's *Intensive Support Programme*. The local authority acknowledges in its Children and Young People's Plan that the good rate of overall improvement at GCSE masks inequalities between the most and least advantaged areas and between different groups of young people, especially as they get older. At age 16, pupils with special educational needs and those from low-income families do less well than in similar areas. Pupils in the two pupil referral units learn well. Behaviour is good in secondary schools and the number of secondary school students who are often absent from school is lower than in similar areas. The locally chosen "*Be Spirited*" outcome, identified in the 2010–2014 draft Children and Young People's Plan, aims to ensure that support for young people with the highest needs is coordinated efficiently so that the difference between those who achieve highly and those who do less well is reduced.

Arrangements for ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of decision making are well-established. Opportunities for this to happen include the "*Be Spirited Survey*", which is part of the strategy for engaging young people and improving their emotional well-being and resilience. Schools are good at involving children and young people in positive activities in their communities. An example of the local authority's work has been to raise awareness in schools of the need to support young people who care for a member of their family. Permanent exclusions from primary, secondary or special schools are rare. Almost all young people who offend are engaged in education, work or training. The inspection of the youth offending service judged that re-offending by young people in North Tyneside was worse than in similar areas. Improving performance in this area and tackling risk-taking behaviours are key priorities of the 2010–2014 draft Children and Young People's Plan.

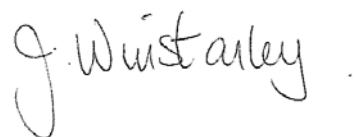
The local authority is having some positive impact in its strategy to alleviate aspects of the economic downturn on children and young people. Schools contribute to this aim well and the drive to improve young people's knowledge, skills and qualifications is bearing fruit. Initiatives to reduce child poverty are given high priority in the local authority's plans. More families on low income are helped to use the funding available for childcare and aspirations are being raised. For example, a campaign to encourage young people to continue their studies or aspire to better jobs has involved over 14,000 students from mostly disadvantaged communities. Work in specific localities has been targeted to ensure that the number of young people not in education, work or training continues to reduce, with intensive support provided to specific groups, such as teenage mothers. The number of young people gaining good qualifications by age 19 is rising. Almost all young people who leave care access suitable accommodation and the proportion in education, work or training matches the national average.

Prospects for improvement

Local services are improving outcomes for children and young people. The local authority's priorities are well chosen and their review of performance demonstrates clearly where further progress is required. For example, one of the priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan is to reduce the number of 16-year-olds who report that they have recently been drunk or taken drugs. The local authority rightly identified this as a priority because, although the rate is no higher than in similar areas, it is above the rate for England. The Children and Young People's Plan acknowledges that North Tyneside is a borough of considerable contrasts and that some communities suffer high levels of deprivation. The local authority supports the very small number of weaker schools well. Finance and resources are being pooled to meet current needs and secure future provision in a climate of tight financial settlements. North Tyneside is working across local authority boundaries to ensure that good quality services are maintained at the most efficient cost.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment