

17 December 2008

Ms Gill Alexander
Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Learning
North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Stephenson House
Stephenson Street
North Shields
NE30 1QA

Dear Ms Alexander

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council 2008

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.

The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

| Assessment judgement area | APA grade |
|---|------------------|
| Overall effectiveness of children's services | 3 |
| Being healthy | 3 |
| Staying safe | 3 |
| Enjoying and achieving | 3 |
| Making a positive contribution | 4 |
| Achieving economic well-being | 3 |
| Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people | 4 |

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 3

North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people. The council’s capacity to improve, including the management of services, is outstanding. Services are consistently above minimum requirements and the council’s contribution to helping children and young people to make a positive contribution is outstanding.

The proportion of learners in North Tyneside achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C (including English and mathematics) in 2007 is above that of similar councils and national averages. The rate of progress between Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. It is very good between Key Stages 3 and 4. The council has a high proportion of schools in all phases of education which are judged as good or better, but also a greater proportion of schools in Ofsted categories of concern than is found nationally.

The performance of young people achieving Level 2 by age 19 has continued to improve year-on-year and is now in line with statistical neighbours and the national average. However, the rate of improvement for the 16 to 18 cohort at Level 3 has remained static for the last two years and is below the national average. Post-16 participation in education, employment and training by care leavers is high but the proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training, while better than statistical neighbours remains the above the national average.

Joint approaches to tackling health inequalities have had a good impact on teenage conception rates and child and adolescent mental health services are excellent. Safeguarding children appears to be effective, with a particular strength in services for looked after children. There are many good opportunities for children and young people to make a positive contribution to their lives and to the improvement of services in North Tyneside.

Being healthy

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

| Major strengths |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of teenage conceptions has reduced by 16.6%, a higher rate than that for similar areas. ▪ There is a continuing decline in the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy and the number of children dying in their first year of life is low. ▪ Excellent Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services ensure timely access to support, including: 100% of children being seen within 26 weeks; specialist support for 16- to 17-year-olds; children with learning difficulties and/or |

disabilities; two hour emergency cover; and partnership arrangements for those with complex needs fully in place.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The initiation of breast-feeding continues to be low at 54.1%. This compares unfavourably against a regional average of 65.9%.
- The rate of participation in the National Healthy Schools Programme (70%) is below that in similar councils (86%). The proportion achieving full accredited status is also below that found in similar councils.

Staying safe

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths is accurate, but insufficient weight has been given to some important weaknesses, for example, the impact of actions on sustaining and improving outcomes.

Major Strengths

- Assessment of the individual needs of children and young people continues to be prompt. Despite an increasing number of initial and core assessments being undertaken, the timeliness in completion is good for initial assessment and very good at 95% for core assessments.
- Performance is very good in relation to allocations of all looked after children, to appropriately qualified social workers, and ensuring that 100% of the reviews of their needs are held on time.
- Recent inspections judged the fostering service to be outstanding and the adoption service to be good.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The rate of 10- to 16-year-old looked after children placed in foster care is 73%, compared to the national average of 81.7%. This is the 11th lowest performance in the country. The proportion placed with family or friends is also lower than in similar councils.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

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| <p>Major Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of pupils achieving five A* to C (including English and mathematics) in 2007 was above that in similar councils and 1.8% above national averages. ▪ There are no permanent exclusions in primary or secondary schools which compares well with national figures. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced by approximately 25% in secondary schools and were 5.9% below national averages in 2007. ▪ The proportion of schools judged good or better is high in all phases of education. ▪ Of the young people leaving care, 96% achieved at least one GCSE A* to G or GNVQ. This is well above the averages of 57.3% nationally and 65.2% for similar councils. |
| <p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of schools placed in an Ofsted category of concern has risen significantly this year and is now higher than in similar councils. |

Making a positive contribution

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

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| <p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good and developing structures for engaging children and young people include a youth council, the Ultimate Kids day, and World Café event. As a result of consultation, children and young people have contributed to the design of play sites and service planning in children's centres. ▪ The council performs very well in terms of ensuring that looked after children are involved in decisions about their lives. All children and young people have contributed to their reviews compared to 90% in similar councils. ▪ There has been a very good reduction in youth crime including a 60% reduction in re-offending and 44% reduction in first time offenders. |
| <p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> |
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Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses in this area underestimate the impact of a number of important weaknesses and does not always provide quantitative evidence to support its judgements.

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| <p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Success rates at Level 2 for 19-year-olds have improved well year-on-year and are now in line with national averages. ▪ Post-16 participation in education, employment or training for care leavers is high. ▪ The proportion of young people not in employment, education and training is below similar councils. |
| <p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rate of improvement for the 16 to 18 cohort at Level 3 has remained static for the last two years and is below the national average. |

Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services

Grade 4

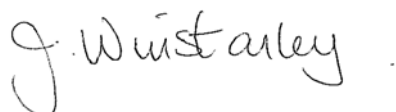
The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people and its management of these services is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence. Strong leadership, good partnership work and a clear focus on performance are key features of the council. Improvements in the arrangements for corporate parenting and strengthened locality team working have now been implemented and the positive engagement of children and young people is well embedded.

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| <p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There has been effective progress on a number of issues raised in the joint area review (JAR), including for example, the increase in attainment of young people leaving care. ▪ There is evidence of good partnership working, as demonstrated by the effective establishment of the Children's Trust. ▪ The JAR report judged performance management across the partnership as good overall. |
| <p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The percentage of primary and secondary schools with 25% or more surplus places is increasing. |

The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection