

9 December 2009

Ms Gill Alexander
Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Learning
North Tyneside Council
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Dear Ms Alexander

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

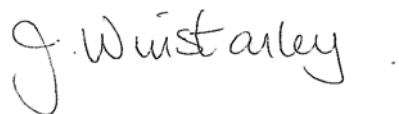
Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in North Tyneside Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the very large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. Children get off to a good start, with an above average proportion of childcare and childminder settings that is good or better. A higher than average proportion of nurseries is also good. There are no inadequate primary schools and the proportion judged to be good or better is above the national average, although it is below similar areas. Twelve of the fourteen secondary schools are good or outstanding and two are satisfactory. This is a greater proportion of good or better secondary schools than in similar areas and the national picture. One special school is adequate and the other four are good or better. One pupil referral unit is good and the other is outstanding. Of the four children's homes one is outstanding, two are good and one is adequate. Performance of the council's fostering agency is outstanding and private fostering arrangements are good. The adoption agency is also good. One serious case review was judged to be inadequate in June 2009. It raises some concerns about the poor terms of reference and the variability in the quality of independent management reviews, including that of the local authority.

Performance against a very large majority of indicators, particularly those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is at least in line with similar areas and broadly in line with national figures, although there are also a few weaknesses. An above average number of children and young people are admitted to hospital because of unintentional and deliberate injuries. There is good performance on assessments of children in need completed within the required timescale but some looked after children move placement too often. The difference in the educational performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is narrowing. Achievements at ages 11 and 16 match the national averages. Pupils who have special educational needs do well, as do young people from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training matches similar areas but it remains much higher than the national average. Achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications by age 19 are average but, at level 3, the inequality gap between young people from low income families and all young people in North Tyneside is wider than in similar areas.

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.

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA