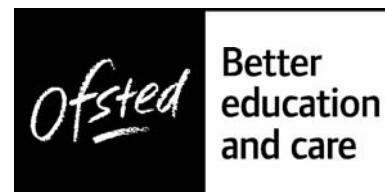


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Making Social Care
Better for People



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1 November 2006

Dear Ms Alexander

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTH TYNESIDE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

1

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council consistently delivers above minimum requirements for children and young people. All of the services can demonstrate how they are improving the achievement and well being of children and young people. Action has been taken to improve the areas identified in last year's APA. The authority has integrated its responsibilities for social care and education functions. It has ambitious plans to develop locality based front line services with key partner agencies. The development of a co-located integrated team, Raising Health and Education for Looked After Children (RHELAC) has been instrumental in improving performance specifically for looked after children and young people. The authority now has strengths in all key aspects of its work and has good capacity to improve services further. The council has a clear view of its own strengths and areas for improvement in order to further raise the quality of provision and standards.

Being healthy

The contribution the authority makes towards improving the health of children and young people in the area is good. Steady improvement has been made in this outcome since the previous APA with the delivery of services being more integrated. There is access to a wider range of health performance information particularly in relation to obesity and fitness which is being used to plan future service delivery.

Substance misuse services are strategically coordinated and based on a comprehensive needs analysis. Access to substance misuse services is good with positive links being developed with schools.

Last year's good performance in relation to the health of looked after children has been maintained.

The development of a comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has continued, based upon a 3 year needs assessment. The authority has arrangements with health partners for pooling grant aid and has separated the commissioning and provider functions. The authority recognises there is still work to do making further improvements to the service, particularly in formalising the 24/7 service and in developing therapy services.

The incidence of teenage pregnancy is reducing. The authority has acknowledged this as an area for improvement and has developed with partner agencies, a co-located integrated support team to target interventions with teenage parents and work more closely with schools.

The authority has ambitious plans to reduce obesity and increase fitness. It is collating base line data that will inform future service provision. It is working closely with schools on a range of initiatives including the healthy school standards, school meals, and leisure and fitness activities.

Staying safe

The authority makes a good contribution towards promoting and securing the safety of children and young people. Its performance is good and action has been taken to address areas for improvement identified in last year's APA. There are some aspects that require further analysis and improvement.

The authority has invested resources in developing the RHELAC integrated service. This new service is beginning to positively impact on outcomes for looked after children.

The number of referrals of children in need has increased and the number of core assessments has risen but remains low. This is due to closer working relationships with partner agencies and the appointment of permanent staff. The authority is aware of this and is investing resources in analysing referral and assessment information, trends and thresholds to ensure that these are appropriate. The authority recognises that further work is needed on its business processes and in developing the skills of newly appointed middle managers. The timescales for completing initial and core assessments remain good.

All children and young people on the child protection register have an allocated social worker. Every child protection case is reviewed to good timescales. Further scrutiny is needed around the number of re-registrations and duration on the Child Protection Register where performance over recent years has been mixed.

The number of looked after children remains low through gate keeping by senior managers and the use of placement panels. The authority is working well with health partners to reduce the number of children and young people being placed out of the area. The authority needs to ensure that when making placement decisions, thresholds for accommodation remain appropriate. All children and young people looked after have an allocated social worker. The long-term stability of placements of looked after children is good with joint protocols in place to monitor missing children.

The authority has developed a pro active recruitment strategy for foster carers and is working closely with a neighbouring authority to develop a treatment foster care programme. The conversion rate from enquiry to approval as foster carers is good. The authority plans to raise the profile of private fostering arrangements through an advertising campaign.

The number of children and young people adopted fell but remains good. Timescales of adoptions within 12 months of best interest decision fell significantly. The authority recognised this and has put in place a case tracking mechanism to ensure that timescales are monitored and appropriate timely action is taken.

The authority is working closely with partner agencies to review the status, role and function of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Recommendations from the review will inform the business plan for the forthcoming year.

Enjoying and achieving

The authority makes a good contribution to ensuring that children and young people achieve at school and enjoy their education.

Early years provision is good and continues to improve. It strongly promotes children's development and well being, with outcomes which are above the national average at the end of the Foundation Stage. The local authority has established effective arrangements to ensure that there is suitable monitoring, training and support for the full range of settings. This results in consistently satisfactory and often good or better provision across the borough.

Results in all subject areas in Key Stage 1 have declined slightly since last year, but they remain at least at the national average and for English and science above that of similar authorities. The results at Key Stage 2 at level 4 and above are higher than both the national average and that of similar authorities.

Attainment at Key Stage 3 has improved, particularly in mathematics, which is now above both the national average and that of similar authorities. The improvement in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results has continued this year, with the authority's highest ever results for five or more A* to C grades. This is now in line with the national average, and continues to be above that of similar authorities, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress is around average across all key stages, although it has improved in specific stages and individual schools as a result of the authority's input. In 2005, all but one secondary schools achieved the floor target of at least 30% of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades. The authority has provided appropriate support for this school and standards are improving.

The authority has also provided good quality support for the one school which has a Notice to Improve.

Raising boys' achievement was an area for improvement in last year's APA. The authority has provided considerable and well focused support to schools, which has resulted in a significant improvement, particularly in English at Key Stage 3. The council is now rightly extending this work to include personalised learning for all pupils.

There is very good provision for educational and enrichment activities outside of school, both via a wide range of activities and through the innovative, high quality Learning Portal. These contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment and to the raising of standards. There is good support for developing provision for higher achieving pupils in schools, but this is not yet embedded consistently in schools' practice. The authority acknowledges the need to improve higher level attainment.

The council has implemented, via the RHELAC team, a range of co-ordinated and sometimes innovative strategies to improve the attainment and attendance of looked after children. Attendance has improved, but still remains lower than the national average. The proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSE graded A* to G or an equivalent general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) has almost doubled to 81.5%, which is well above the national average. However, the number achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades has

declined slightly and is now below average. The number of children and young people in both cases is small.

Attendance of all children and young people continues to be good and exclusions have fallen significantly so that the numbers are now below the national average. A strategy to support parents is in development but is not yet complete

The council has begun a substantial re-organisation and development of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). This has significantly increased the numbers of pupils with LDD educated in mainstream school through resourced provision and is increasing the numbers of pupils educated within the borough. The number of pupils subject to a Statement of Special Educational Needs has reduced considerably.

These developments are good quality and are well supported with good levels of resourcing and training. However, it is not yet possible to assess the relative progress of pupils with LDD in all types of schools. This was an area for development in the last APA. Progress on this has begun but is not yet complete. A baseline has been established, and a system is now in place which is due to provide the first set of comparative data in the autumn term 2006.

Making a positive contribution

Performance in this outcome is good and improvement has led to the development of a cohesive consultation strategy with children and young people. Consultation has been widespread and included children and young people from vulnerable groups. Specific focus has been given to the development of a young carers strategy which is underpinned through financial support to the voluntary sector. Area Children's Strategy Groups run in parallel to council and partner groups and help influence local decision-making to improve outcomes.

Children and young people have been actively engaged through consultation and the healthy schools program to identify their priorities and concerns. The Director of Children's Services and the Mayor meet regularly with children and young people's representatives to discuss these issues. These priorities have informed the development of the Children and Young People's Plan. A range of forums exist that influence and help develop policies as well and providing links at a high strategic level. This process actively involves the Mayor of North Tyneside who has identified resources that children and young people's forums then spend locally to improve outcomes. The authority has plans to develop a similar strategy to consult with parents and carers.

There are good ratios of youth workers to young people and the percent of 13-19 year olds reached by youth services has increased for the 2nd year to a good level.

The council's commitment to inclusion can be demonstrated in the strong performance of looked after children and young people participating in their reviews. The authority has a good working relationship with the youth offending service and has maintained a good performance in relation to offending of children and young people looked after.

Achieving economic well-being

The authority makes a good contribution to enabling children and young people to achieve economic well being. Well established strengths in this area have been maintained and developed, and some other areas improved. There are very strong partnership arrangements between the authority, the Learning and Skills Council, high Schools, Tyne Metropolitan College, the Connexions Service and a wide range of providers and employers. The 14-19 strategy continues to be a strength, with good planning and the extension of a range of pathways through an expanding network of partners. The use and impact of the Learning Portal is contributing to improved learning for a large number of young people. Work Based Learning and the increased flexibility programme are good and continue to improve. The range and take up of vocational GCSEs has increased, and outcomes for students are better than the regional average. However, although attainment at 16-18 has improved at a good rate, it still remains lower than the national average.

The proportion of young people progressing to higher education has improved very significantly. This was an area for development in the last APA. The number of young people not in education, employment or training has been reduced and the authority is now in line with the regional average. The number of direct payments to 16 and 17 year olds has doubled. The authority has centred a number of interventions around increasing economic well being in areas of deprivation, such as increasing the number of childcare places, and improving the take up of benefits and entitlements such as Care to Learn.

The authority has established two all age skills and enterprise centres, with plans for two more, to match the four children's strategy areas. These centres are based around a relevant subject specialism, and further enhance the close links between all areas of learning 14-19.

The authority has developed a transition strategy and a person-centred transition review pilot for young people with disabilities. This was an area for development in the last APA. Progress against this is good. There have been a number of initiatives to support this, including events based around the involvement of this group of young people and their parents. All young people with LDD now have a multi agency transition review from Year 9. The proportion of young people with LDD in further education has improved and is now the highest in the region.

Looked after children now have access to nationally recognised qualifications in all settings. This was an area for development in the last APA. There has been a significant improvement in the number of looked after children progressing to further education. The number going on to higher education is significantly higher than the national average

There is a significant amount of inadequate housing, which impacts on the life chances and well being of children and young people. However, the authority is prioritising developments for families, and ensures that appropriate actions are taken in respect of vulnerable young people.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

The Directorate has re-structured appropriately to integrate social care and education responsibilities. There are very good levels of collaboration between agencies and teams, and with a range of statutory and voluntary partners. The extent and sophistication of joint working are increasing, and there is some evidence of pooled budgets. However, further work is needed to realign existing budgets to support this new structure.

The authority has ambitious plans to reconfigure front line service delivery into multi agency locality based teams. There are already some very good outcomes of this emerging way of working, such as the all age skills and enterprise centres. This reconfiguration is based around sound needs analysis. The authority has a good track record of auditing and matching service delivery to need.

The Children and Young People's Plan is good quality and is well supported by a range of subsidiary plans, which have clear responsibilities, milestones and accountability arrangements. The plan is underpinned by a 4 year capital and revenue plan. There is a strong relationship with the elected Mayor who has given priority to children and young peoples' issues.

The authority is highly committed to consulting with a range of partners and actively promotes shared ownership and responsibility of strategies. It is outstanding in its commitment to the involvement of children and young people in the development, implementation and monitoring of children and young people's services. Children and young people are involved in every area and at every level.

The self-assessment undertaken for the APA demonstrates that the authority has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in teenage conception rates • health assessments of looked after children and young people • CAMHS referral, screening and assessment services. Separation of commissioning and provider functions • substance misuse assessment and Early Intervention. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collation of comprehensive baseline obesity data • formalisation of CAMHS 24/7 service • further development of CAMHS therapeutic services.

<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in numbers of children and young people looked after • establishment of multi agency co located REHLAC team • improved placement stability of children and young people looked after • timescales of initial and core assessments. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • private fostering arrangements • referral and assessment service – business processes and thresholds • adoption timescales • re-registrations and duration of children and young people on the Child Protection Register.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raising boys' achievement • reduction in exclusions • good attendance • KS3 and GCSE improvement • improved provision for children and young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties • early years provision • educational and enrichment activities outside school. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving LAC attendance • development of parent support strategy • monitoring and using data on the progress of children and young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties • raising higher levels of attainment.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final warnings of children and young people looked after • numbers of children and young people looked after taking part in their reviews • consultation with a range of children and young people (including looked after children and young carers) • establishment of Area Children's Strategy Groups. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • embedding of children and young people's consultation strategy • development of parent and carers consultation strategy.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14-19 strategy • extension and impact of vocational GCSE and flexible pathways. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve 16-18 Average Points Score(APS).
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement • a range of strategies to address risk taking behaviours of children and young people e.g. alcohol, substance misuse and teenage pregnancy • multi agency strategic approach to reducing obesity and improving fitness • low rate of staff turnover and vacant posts. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-alignment of existing budgets in response to the establishment of the new directorate • further development of pooled budgets.

Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

- The extent to which parents and carers are supported and involved in helping their children to achieving better outcomes.
- How well the authority analyses and supports the progress of children and young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties across all settings.
- How well the authority raises achievement in key areas such as 16-18, higher level attainment, and specific schools and groups of pupils.
- The extent to which the range of information, consultation and needs analysis inform service priorities, service delivery and improved outcomes.
- How well the authority continues to engage with a range of partners and key stakeholders e.g. schools colleges, health and children and young people and their families.
- How well the authority develops the integration agenda.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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