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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Ms Gill Alexander  
Director of Children's Services  
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**1 December 2005**

Dear Ms Alexander

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF NORTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL'S  
EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 4 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your 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.

**Being healthy**

Outcomes in this area are good with positive promotion of healthy lifestyles supported by multi-agency working, often within integrated teams. Improved outcomes are reported for both pre- and school-age children. The health of looked after children has improved significantly supported by a ring-fenced post and the Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership Group. There is a strong commitment to the development of a comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in the borough. An inclusive Partnership Board is leading service development for children with special needs and reports effective changes in improving access and systems. However, the council recognises the need to improve out-of-hours access and services for children with a learning disability.

The overall rate of teenage pregnancy in the borough remains too high although the rate of reduction is faster than the English average. A targeted intervention programme is focussed on specific geographic areas.

## **Staying safe**

Outcomes for this area are good with sustained and improved performance for placements for looked after children and child protection. Comprehensive child protection training using a multi-agency approach is well-established for all schools. Anti-bullying policies are in place and there is a clear and effective system to monitor and respond to racist incidents. A restructured child protection service has led to improvements in child protection supported by a significant developmental agenda focused on family support. A Local Children Safeguarding Board has already been formed building on a history of effective multi-agency working in the borough. The council takes a lead role in developing regional child protection protocols for asylum seekers and refugee children.

Placement stability has improved with a clear emphasis on achieving permanence for looked after children. There is a clear focus on preventative services and family support and there is a reduction in numbers of looked after children. There is a good and improving performance for child protection reviews and re-registration supported by a good level of auditing. Child protection work is supported by a joint police and social services protection unit. Additional support for looked after children with complex needs has been provided through a treatment foster care scheme (jointly with Northumberland Council) and specific CAMHS resources.

Outreach and short-term break services for disabled children are increasing and access for those with complex needs has improved with better support and training for carers, and new service development. However, reported support levels are below the council's comparator groups and this should be reviewed.

Referral rates for social services show an erratic trend but resource investment in a performance information team has improved confidence that data is now clean and provides an accurate baseline for the council. The long-term stability of looked after children shows a good improvement and the focussed work to achieve this should continue. This work will be supported by action within residential childcare services to address issues of staffing, management capacity and buildings. Resources are now in place to address the need for person-centred planning for children with disability in transition, and this is now a priority for the council.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes in this area are good.

The overall quality of early years provision is good and promotes children's development and well-being. The rapid expansion of good quality full day-care and out-of-school provision is making a significant contribution to improving outcomes, particularly access to childcare places for children in need as part of an integrated package of care and support for children and families. The council recognises there is a

need to monitor carefully the sustainability and overall quality of provision to ensure parents and carers have a range of choice.

At Key Stage 1, results in 2004 in reading, writing and mathematics at level 2 and above are better than the national averages and those of similar authorities. At Key Stage 2, results in 2004 at level 4 and above are above the national averages for English and science and well above for mathematics. Value added between Key Stage 1 and 2 is in line with the national average. The contribution primary education makes to children's attainment is good.

At Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national averages in all core subjects and above that of similar authorities. There has been steady improvement in attainment at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and the results for 2004 for five or more A\* to C grades exceeded those of similar authorities. Value added between Key Stages 2 and 3 is in line with the national average, as is the value added measure between Key Stages 3 and 4. All secondary schools achieved the floor target of at least 30% of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades.

There are differences in the performance of boys and girls, particularly in English at Key Stage 3, although appropriate strategies are being developed to reduce the gap. The primary strategy and the focus on gifted and talented pupils are targeted sharply to improve higher level performance at Key Stage 2. The proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSE graded A\* to G or an equivalent general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) has improved by over 14 percentage points to 46% in 2004 which is slightly below the national average. However, the number achieving five or more GCSE A\* to C grades remains too low. The council has identified the attainment of looked after children as a priority for improvement and a cross-service group chaired by the Director for Children's Services is focusing on strategies to improve attainment and attendance, and at the same time listening to what looked after children and young people have to say. Monitoring and analysis by the council shows no significant differences between the performance of pupils from a minority ethnic heritage and other children in the borough. The attainment and performance in national tests of children and young people with special educational needs is monitored closely and has led to improvement. However, the development of a comprehensive system of assessment to measure the progress of children with special educational needs in all schools has been slower than anticipated. As yet, the council does not have the baseline data to show added value for children with special educational needs.

Attendance at school has improved and is above the national average, unauthorised absence rates in secondary schools are in line with the national average. The council has had a clear strategy to improve overall levels of attendance but there has been insufficient focus on improving the attendance of looked after children until recently.

Exclusion rates have reduced significantly over the last three years with the first day response team providing effective support to schools. The outcomes of this work, together with behaviour support strategies have been very positive for children and young people. The council has taken appropriate action to reduce the number of

schools with significant surplus places and good strategies are in place to manage falling rolls.

Support for schools placed in formal categories of concern by Ofsted is very effective. No mainstream schools have been placed in Ofsted categories in the last year. The council has an effective system in place to monitor schools' progress, to challenge and focus interventions.

### **Making a positive contribution**

Overall outcomes in this area are good. The council has a range of innovative projects to engage with young people and there is strong evidence of young people's views having an impact and bringing about change. Area meetings ensure around 3,000 children and young people participate in the work of the youth council and schools councils provide an effective voice for children. The development of an authority wide participation strategy is intended to further improve consultation and ensure consistency across all services offered by the council.

Children are enabled to make a positive contribution through a wide range of learning, recreational and cultural activities. The youth service plays a significant and effective role in co-ordinating and supporting these.

Looked after children are now particularly well engaged, as is shown by the very high percentage of looked after children who have communicated their views to a review. A mentor project focused on work with vulnerable young people is expanding and the quality of support from care leavers' personal advisors.

The area has a high performing Youth Offending Team (YOT), a highly motivated team that places the interests of children and young people at the centre of its work. Local performance in relation to the rate of young people engaged in education, training and employment is good, recidivism rates show a better picture than the national one and victim satisfaction measures are high. However, over the period September 2004 to December 2004, first timers entering the youth justice system have not reduced in line with national rates and performance in relation to timely referrals to CAMHS has been adversely affected by a staff vacancy. The council has acknowledged this and a full time CAMHS worker has been in post since April. Overall, the YOT is now working hard to improve early intervention activity, particularly with looked after children and relationships with other agencies such as Barnardos, Turning Point and the local court are an effective feature of partnership work to improve the outcomes for young people who come into contact with the youth justice system.

The council has identified young carers as a vulnerable group for whom it needs to improve overall services and support. A young carers' strategy is being developed and work is ongoing to raise awareness of their needs and to support teachers and other adults to address these by improving training and resources more generally.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

Outcomes in this area are good.

The quality of education provided for 14 to 19 year olds is highly satisfactory. The proportion of young people progressing to higher education is improving and the council has been very successful in reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training ahead of its published target. The number of young people involved in the increased flexibility programme has doubled, although outcomes are more variable. The council has initiated a number of successful strategies to improve 14 to 19 provision and to enhance the range of curriculum opportunities, for example the confederated work-based learning centre which supports a range of vocational pathways to respond to local needs in the employment market. There is good collaboration in the planning and delivery of post-16 education and training. The introduction of a learner entitlement and locally agreed quality assurance procedures is central to the drive to improve post-16 outcomes for young people. The council has an effective partnership with the local Learning and Skills Council and the Connexions Service.

The support given to looked after children by the specialist leaving care team is leading to very much improved outcomes for education, training and employment. Work between the voluntary sector and the council is assisting the transition to adult life, particularly through the pathway to work project, although the council recognises more needs to be done to ensure such pathways lead to nationally recognised qualifications for looked after children and children educated other than at school. The establishment of the leaving care implementation group offers a good basis for continued multi-agency work to ensure that the needs of care leavers are prioritised effectively.

All children and young people aged 13 to 19 years are supported by a named connexions service personal adviser to devise and keep under review plans for transition at 16 and 19 years old. The particularly innovative work undertaken with young mothers enables them to access employment and training opportunities effectively. Similarly, in its response to the government's 'Building Schools for the Future' initiative the council has prioritised the development of inclusive provision for children with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities.

Action to promote early years childcare and education has led to an increase of places in disadvantaged areas and work through the SureStart programme, Jobcentre Plus and training providers, is making a positive impact on the economic well-being of parents and carers of children and young people. Improvements include an increase in the number of young parents able to access training as a result of providing free transport and childcare, increased recruitment of childcare staff from under-represented groups and taster placements for deaf people who want to work with children. However, the council recognises that better coordination of childcare provision and strengthening of the links to support and training in targeted areas remains a priority to improve further overall levels of economic well-being in the borough.

The council has made progress with improving the direct payments made to young people, although further improvement is needed. It can demonstrate that in developing joint packages of practical and financial support between the leaving care and children's disabilities teams, young people with disabilities and/or special educational needs who are in transition are receiving appropriate support to improve their life chances. Considerable work has been undertaken to research and respond to the needs of young people with disability and/or special educational needs to identify appropriate post-16 and employment pathways.

## SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved levels of health assessment for looked after children</li> <li>active promotion of health improvement programmes</li> <li>integrated service delivery and pool budgets.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further reduce teenage pregnancy rates</li> <li>CAMHS out of hours and services to children with a learning disability.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>revised effective management arrangements for child protection services</li> <li>good placement outcomes for looked after children</li> <li>improved child protection performance.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>placement stability for looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rapid expansion of child care/ early years provision</li> <li>pupils' attainment at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4</li> <li>a comprehensive accessibility strategy is in place to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act</li> <li>attendance in primary and secondary</li> <li>targeting of the preventative strategies to reduce exclusions</li> <li>effective monitoring, challenge and support through the school improvement strategy</li> <li>management of surplus places and the strategy to deal with falling school rolls.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>boys' underachievement</li> <li>systematic analysis of value added for pupils with special educational needs</li> <li>performance of looked after children in higher grade GCSE passes and their attendance at school.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality of childcare and early years education overall</li> <li>• improved involvement of looked after children in statutory reviews</li> <li>• an effective YOT with positive outcomes, for example, reduced recidivism rates</li> <li>• the council has a wide range of events to engage children and young people.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement the participation strategy systematically across all services of the council</li> <li>• develop a strategy to support young carers and review the support they receive from local services</li> <li>• role of the YOT in prevention and in support for looked after children who offend.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14 to 19 strategy and the learning entitlement for students</li> <li>• the Local Learning Partnership's role in raising standards</li> <li>• improvement in average points score per student</li> <li>• innovative work with vulnerable groups, for example, young mothers, care leavers.</li> <li>• all 13 to 19 year olds have named connexions personal advisor</li> <li>• specialist leaving care team's support to enable young people to access education and employment.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve post-16 participation rates</li> <li>• ensure looked after children and young people educated out of school have access to nationally recognised qualifications</li> <li>• increase the number of direct payments to 16 to 17 year olds</li> <li>• person centred planning to support children with disabilities through transition.</li> </ul>

## Service management

Capacity is assessed as good. The council has worked effectively with partners to present a clear analysis of need with targeted improvements identified, and they continue to develop an outcome focus for reporting progress. There are a range of consultation and participation events that actively engage young people, including young people with a disability, in contributing to strategies and service development.

There are effective multi-agency strategic planning structures that include statutory and voluntary partners. Through strategic and service plans, partner agencies are targeting service improvements and there are good examples of integrated working and pooled budgets. There are clear reporting and accountability lines within the overall planning structures. The Every Child Matters agenda is being taken forward through locality planning groups with good levels of consultation.

Service planning within the council is linked to corporate priorities with a clear focus on performance improvement to support national and local priorities. The council plan identifies actions with milestones and targets.

The council has invested in developing performance data and embedding a performance culture that engages managers and practitioners in using data to support service improvement.

There are good levels of investment in training. Difficulties in recruitment in social care reflect regional and national issues. However, the council has developed some innovative approaches to the recruitment and retention of staff.

The council has appointed a Director of Children's Services and the new structure reinforces the link between achievement, school improvement and inclusion. The council acknowledges the challenge in developing the culture and systems change required to support integrated service delivery. Work has begun to address the longstanding issue of improvement in the education of looked after children. Although previously identified as an area for improvement, the council has yet to show sufficient evidence of the effectiveness of joint working in this aspect of its work.

### **Areas for exploration in the joint area review:**

#### **Being healthy**

*Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and younger people:*

- examine teenage pregnancy rates and effectiveness of strategies, some of which appear to be highly innovative.

*Action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health:*

- review progress and development of a comprehensive CAMHS service.

#### **Enjoying and achieving**

*Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:*

- strategies to reduce underachievement among boys.

*Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:*

- achievement and attendance rates of looked after children.

#### **Making a positive contribution**

*Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives:*

- evaluate the quality and effectiveness of support for young carers.



*Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:*

- evaluate the council's participation strategy and its impact.

*Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people.*

*Children and young people who are looked after are helped to make a positive contribution:*

- evaluate the effectiveness of work with looked after children who offend.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

*Children and Young People with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to enjoy and achieve:*

- person-centred plans are in place for children with disabilities.

*Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality.*

*Children and young people who are looked after are helped to achieve economic well-being:*

- evaluate curriculum pathways and recognised qualification routes for all, but specifically for young people in alternative education settings and looked after children.

## Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



**FLO HADLEY**

Divisional Manager  
Office for Standards in Education



**JONATHAN PHILLIPS**

Director – Quality, Performance and Methods  
Commission for Social Care Inspection

## APA final judgements 2005: North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements <sup>1</sup>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
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 capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

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### 1

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