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Mr Richard Stiff
Executive Director for Children's Services
North Lincolnshire Council
Pittwood House
Ashby Road
Scunthorpe
North Lincolnshire
DN16 1AB

Dear Mr Stiff

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in North Lincolnshire 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	2
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3

*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 Lincolnshire Council delivers services for children and young people that are consistently above minimum requirements for users. The council’s capacity to improve, including its management of services, is good. The council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations made in the previous APA and the recent JAR of February 2008. The pace of progress has been good in most areas, for example in raising the attainment of children and young people, especially at Key Stage 4. Progress in the area of being healthy is adequate. There is a strong commitment to, and involvement of schools in, the Healthy Schools Programme. Health services for looked after children are very good, and the substance misuse service for young people is performing well. However, as highlighted in the APA letter of 2007, teenage conception rates and the development of a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) were areas of concern and limited progress has been made on these issues. Although there is a strong partnership between the council and the Primary Care Trust and a number of new initiatives are in place to tackle public health issues, it is too early to identify whether these are leading to significant improvement.

Being healthy

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The substance misuse service for young people is performing well with 18% of those aged under 18 receiving a service compared with 8% for the region as a whole. Almost all of those aged under 18, who are in treatment, receive it from a specialist with specific skills in helping young people. This compares with only 83% of young people in the region as a whole. ▪ The proportion of looked after children receiving a range of health assessments is very good at 94%, compared to 83% for similar councils, with a steady rate of improvement since 2001–02. ▪ All schools are participating in the National Healthy Schools Programme and two thirds have reached the required standards.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient progress has been made in reducing teenage conceptions and improving CAHMS. ▪ The proportion of mothers initiating breast-feeding at 56.7% in 2006/07 is significantly lower than the benchmark average of 71% and the national average of 69.6%. The overall trend is one of very slow improvement.

- The latest data on the infant mortality rate indicates that there are 6.4 deaths per 1000 live births. This compares unfavourably against an average of 5.4 for similar areas and 5.0 for England as a whole. There is no overall trend of improvement in these figures for the council in recent years. Also the percentage of mothers known to be smoking during pregnancy is 21.3%, well above the regional average of 17.4%

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 and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The timely completion of initial assessments, core assessments, review of child protection conferences and statutory reviews of looked after children's care plans are all very good when compared to similar councils and national averages. ▪ The number of looked after children with three or more placements in a year has halved during the last year. ▪ Strong support for families of children in need along with careful management and decision making has resulted in low numbers of looked after children and low numbers on the Child Protection Register. ▪ The rate of children placed for adoption and special guardianship from the looked after system and the speed with which these placements are made is now very good.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A recent inspection report of the work of the youth offending team identified significant weaknesses in arrangements to safeguard young people in the criminal justice system. The council is working with the Youth Justice Board on an action plan of improvement but there is still much work to do.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This is in line with the council's self-assessment. 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"> ▪ Attainment is improving overall, especially for the percentage of young people gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics which is at a faster rate than that for similar councils and nationally. ▪ Attendance continues to improve, including for looked after children. ▪ The council has two schools with a Notice to Improve; this is very good compared to similar councils and the national average.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council has limited analysis about the performance of children and young people from ethnic minorities.

Making a positive contribution

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"> ▪ There has been good partnership working between the youth offending team, the police, the fire service, the youth service and health partners to support young people at risk of offending behaviour and this has led to a reduction in numbers of first time entrants to the youth justice system of 27% in the last year. ▪ The proportion of juveniles engaged with the youth offending team who are in employment, education or training is 90%, the highest in the region. ▪ There has been good work to increase and develop consultation with and the participation of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in decisions about their lives and to improve transition arrangements from children's to adult services.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of children and young people who re-offend is 36.2%, a figure higher than that found in similar council areas.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

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

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significantly more young people than previously, including those from vulnerable groups, continue into employment, education or training after the age of 16. ▪ The council has responded well to the recommendations in the JAR by ensuring that all partners are now involved in the 14–19 developments. ▪ There has been a good increase in the number of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities entering further education.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of young people not in employment, education or training continues to decline, but is still above statistical neighbours and national figures. The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds whose current activity is not known is twice the figure found nationally and for similar councils. ▪ The number of apprenticeships available for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low.

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

Grade 3

The council’s capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good and its management of these services is good. Thorough consultation has been undertaken with a range of partners and this has resulted in generally good progress since the 2007 APA and the recent JAR. As a result, improvements in the educational outcomes for children and young people, including vulnerable groups, are evident and in some respects improvement is at a faster rate than that found in similar councils and nationally. The council conducts a comprehensive analysis of need and takes into account the views of a wide range of partners and groups. Good performance management arrangements in children’s social care have supported the strong performance in the area of staying safe. A significant development since last year is the 14–19 collaboration between schools, colleges and other significant partners. The Children and Young People’s Plan builds on previous strengths and sets out clearly how improvements against each outcome area are to be achieved. Priorities are clear, with regular measurable targets to check the impact of actions and the progress being made. However, although partnership working between the council and the Primary Care Trust is very good, the capacity of the partners to drive forward the required level of improvements in a range of public health measures, and especially teenage conceptions, is less well developed.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The trend of improvement in many education outcomes is growing at a faster rate than those of similar councils and nationally. ▪ Well developed and monitored responses to the recommendations in the JAR.

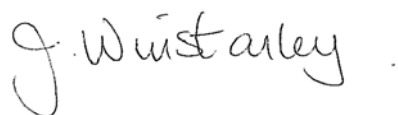
Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Despite strong partnerships some health outcomes are not improving quickly enough. |
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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