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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Mr Richard Stiff  
Executive Director of Children's Services  
North Lincolnshire Council  
Pittwood House  
Ashby Road  
SCUNTHORPE

**1 November 2006**

Dear Mr Stiff

**2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE 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 awarded <sup>1</sup> |
|---|----------------------------|
| 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 | 4                          |

<sup>1</sup>

| 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 Lincolnshire Council makes good provision for children and young people. This provision is benefiting from the structure of the Children's Services Authority, which has demonstrated commitment to joint working.

There are strengths in the priority given to vulnerable groups in plans and service provision and outcomes are improving for these children and young people.

The council has taken action to improve the weaker areas identified in last year's APA, and has secured improved outcomes in most areas. The council has strived to be inclusive in seeking the views and contributions of stakeholders, partners and children and young people themselves in setting well-considered priorities for the coming year.

The council has a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses and a strong sense of how it wants to improve services and outcomes for children, young people and their families. It works very effectively with partners to maximise the impact of resources to benefit children and young people. It has good capacity to improve its services further.

## **Being healthy**

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good.

North Lincolnshire's Children's Services Authority (CSA) has built on the Children's Trust Pathfinder and developed an integrated and co-ordinated approach to the provision and promotion of health improvement. Strategies of engagement have secured committed joint working and partnerships to deliver through the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The CSA has acted on the 2005 Adolescent Lifestyle Survey, which identified high levels of overweight and obesity and low levels of physical activity. Smoking and alcohol misuse are significant issues for North Lincolnshire's children and young people. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) was unable to prioritise funding in 2005–06 for smoking cessation but plans to appoint a co-ordinator to deliver training to existing practitioners. There are robust practices in place through individual health programmes for children's homes and the foster service, monitoring indicates improved awareness and some success.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted through targeted early intervention; all schools are engaged with National Healthy School programme (NHSP). Evaluation is reported as showing positive responses to Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) messages. The health needs of looked after children are being met to a high level with improvements demonstrated in the main health indicator. Fostering services inspections commend the promotion of developmental and health opportunities achieved by working in a multi-disciplinary way to secure positive outcomes.

Despite considerable efforts the council acknowledge the increase in teenage pregnancy rates and is progressing a strategy using enhanced Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to reduce the trend. It is strengthening the reporting processes between the Teenage Pregnancy Board and the Children's Board and is targeting specific vulnerable groups.

## **Staying safe**

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is excellent.

The percentage of looked after children in foster placements or placed for adoption has improved to just below the top range. The council has improved or maintained performance across a range of key indicators. Many have achieved or sustained top national band performance levels, for example, performance on managing child protection cases is very good, stability of placements is also very good and children's needs are assessed in a timely manner. Support for vulnerable children and young people is high on the Authority's agenda, structures are in place council wide which promote a variety of initiatives, mentoring, sport and leisure activity.

Areas identified as requiring improvement from the 2005 APA have been addressed and good improvements reported. Robust management systems are in place for duty, core assessments, child protection and looked after children pathways.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board has been established with appropriate membership, a high priority is given within the authority to child protection procedures.

A best practice group working closely with Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) and key stakeholders has been effective.

Consultation with children and young people identified a real fear of bullying; this is a particular concern for disabled children, looked after children and young carers. A comprehensive anti-bullying strategy is in place involving schools, parents and the community. A CYPP priority to review and develop the strategy is making progress in order to reduce the incidence and fear of bullying.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good.

Early year provision remains satisfactory and the proportion of children achieving early learning goals is around the national average in most respects. Childcare judgments were good overall although nursery education was satisfactory. The CSA is expanding the support that it offers. Transition arrangements through to Key Stage 1 are being developed. Standards in schools have broadly continued to rise and progress has improved although both remain below national levels. Standards at Key Stage 2 and 3 continued to improve, although standards at Key Stage 1 have fallen slightly. At Key Stage 4 the council has broadened the range of pupils who pass GCSEs or equivalents, supported by good vocational partnerships. The proportion gaining at least five higher grades has also continued to improve, but not as rapidly as the national rate. The local authority has identified the relatively slow development of GNVQ courses as one factor in this. The influence of the local authority's strong track record in promoting other 14-16 vocational

courses and partnerships is evident. Inspection judgments indicate good support and progress regarding pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Behaviour and attendance are improving. Pupils' personal development and provision for their care, guidance and support are clear strengths in primary schools. The CSA has continued to be effective in reducing permanent exclusions to nil through the use of managed transfers; fixed term exclusions were high in both phases, but they are now reducing significantly. Data from 2003/4 shows that the number of hours tuition provided for excluded pupils has improved for some but not all children, although the numbers involved are small.

Attendance is generally good in primary schools but it was identified as inadequate in two school inspections; strategies to improve secondary attendance have been very effective. Performance in managing the education of looked after children is clearly improving with good protocols for managing school placements, good support structures and improving outcomes at age 16. Attendance of looked after children has been a focus for improvement. Looked after children pupils excluded from school have a secure alternative environment, which is being extended to provide for other secondary pupils.

Support for school improvement is effective and the council has acted appropriately when necessary. The CSA's use of data has helped it to provide targeted challenge and support in the small number of schools where it has been necessary, contributing to improvements in the 7-16 age range.

## **Making a positive contribution**

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good.

Building on the effective participation strategy for looked after children, the council has recently developed a participation strategy for all children and young people to enable their involvement in decision making processes. The strategy is based on the National Youth Agency 'Hear By Right' and has been produced by the multi agency Voice and Influence group, facilitated by the Youth Service. The Youth forum X-Press has been reformed and includes a range of young people from diverse backgrounds and ages who meet regularly and aim to make decisions on key issues.

The council is prioritising equality of opportunity to enable children and young people with disability to fully participate in cultural and leisure facilities.

Inspection evidence shows that positive contribution is almost always good and often outstanding in schools. The council and its partners are targeting anti-social behaviour through a range of initiatives. The Restorative Justice Programme and the development of preventative and mentoring capacity to support young people at risk of offending and to encourage changes in lifestyle and aspirations is proving effective. Final reprimands and conviction rates have fallen significantly. The work of the youth offending team is effective, complemented by a good multi agency approach.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

The contribution of the council towards improving outcomes in this area is good. The CSA has secure partnerships for 14-19 education and its vocational courses, offered in colleges, have helped to improve achievement among a wider group and aspirations are improving. Participation in full-time education by young people is particularly good at age 16; rate for care leavers at 18 participating in employment, education or training are very good, representing sustained performance at a high level. Planning is well focussed on the needs of the most vulnerable groups and the council is an effective corporate parent with consistent success in seeking employment opportunities and arranging appropriate housing for care leavers. Support for children with disabilities is good. However, the council is some way above its Connexions Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) target figure.

Achievement and standards for 16-18 year olds at advanced level fell sharply in 2005. Points per entry was well below the figures for similar authorities and national figures whilst overall points were also below these standards. The CSA attributes this to students taking AS courses for which they lacked important skills and is planning ways in which identified students who have done well in vocational courses at age 16 are provided with additional support.

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

The CSA's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further is good.

There is a clear commitment in the CYPP to address the Every Child Matters Agenda. The CSA organised and operated on service areas have set challenging targets for improvements. It is clear that the views of parents, carers and children and young people have been fully taken into account in establishing priorities for development, which are based on analysis of need with particular emphasis on ensuring quality outcomes for the most vulnerable.

Robust strategic planning is a strong feature of the CSA with effective performance management structures. There is clear vision, strong values and leadership and within the council, the proactive engagement of members, scrutiny arrangements and political commitment is a strength providing increased accountability.

North Lincolnshire is a small, low funded council but has responded to the consequential issues of capacity through open flexible structures and working practices. It is realistic about the challenges it faces at a time of many initiatives, e.g. BSF. The new Director adds capacity, the culture of partnership working is well established and there are many examples of joint, multi agency and integrated working adding capacity value.

The council's actions have contributed to improvements in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 overall, and has helped to reduce the numbers of pupils with no or few qualifications at age 16. There have been clear benefits from its emphasis on inclusion, including improved

attendance in secondary schools and highly rated personal development outcomes in inspected primary schools. It has had less impact in Key Stage 1 and in the management of advanced level courses post-16.

Support for school improvement continues to be effective and intervention has been appropriate where necessary. Good data analysis has allowed rapid responses to emerging concerns.

Greater stability in staffing has been achieved due to improvements through effective recruitment and selection processes and fewer working days lost to sickness absence across the council. Children's social services have met or continued to meet budget targets, education have also made budget savings despite considerable pressures on adult education.

The council has a view of its strengths and areas for development and is well placed to improve further.

### Key strengths and areas for improvement

| Key strengths  | Key areas for improvement   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>health of looked after children</li> <li>targeted early intervention and promotion of Healthy lifestyles in schools</li> <li>CAMHS strategies.</li> </ul>  | <p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teenage pregnancy rates</li> <li>smoking, drugs and alcohol misuse.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children and young people are provided with a safe environment</li> <li>more robust management systems around child protection and looked after children pathways</li> <li>improved management of care orders to enable placement stability.</li> </ul> | <p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review of anti-bullying strategy.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pupils' personal development in primary schools</li> <li>improving standards at KS2 and 3</li> <li>more pupils are gaining exam passes as a result of curriculum improvements</li> <li>reduced levels of exclusion.</li> </ul>                | <p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>looked after children absent from school</li> <li>standards at KS1 and accessing higher grades at KS4</li> <li>attendance in some primary schools</li> <li>attendance and attainment of Looked after children at KS4.</li> </ul> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rates of warning and convictions of looked after children</li> <li>• participation in decision making by children and young people</li> <li>• very good inspection judgments in schools.</li> </ul> | <p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participation of children and young people with disability in cultural and leisure activities.</li> </ul> |
| <p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• looked after children care leavers in EET at 19 and suitable accommodation.</li> </ul>   | <p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standards in advanced level courses for 16-18 yr olds.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none</li> </ul>   | <p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none</li> </ul>   |

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

- Reduce teenage pregnancy rates
- Smoking, drugs and alcohol misuse
- Pupils' progress and standards of attainment in Key Stage 1
- Further investigate the attendance and progress of English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils as their numbers in the local authority increase
- Investigate the progress made by pupils across the age range who have learning difficulties
- Students' standards of attainment and progress post-16 including achievement in advanced level and intermediate level courses.

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**

Divisional Manager  
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**JONATHAN PHILLIPS**

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Commission for Social Care Inspection