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Ms Barbara Hughes
Executive Director of Children and Family Services
North East Lincolnshire Council
The Municipal Offices, Town Hall Square
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Dear Ms Hughes

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment 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, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

North East Lincolnshire Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in North East Lincolnshire Council perform adequately. In 2009, a transitional year, North East Lincolnshire was assessed as performing well. However, in 2010 there is not enough good provision, particularly in universal services, to meet the minimum requirements for that grade.

The large majority of types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. This is shown by the performance of special schools and pupil referral units, the further education and sixth form colleges, and the local fostering and adoption agencies. However primary and, particularly, secondary schools are not doing as well with too much provision that is only satisfactory. Not enough children's homes are good or better, although none are inadequate.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services in October 2010 found two strengths and no areas for priority action.

National performance measures show the very large majority of outcomes are in line with or above the averages for England or for similar areas. Outcomes are not as strong for those relating to achieving economic well-being. The achievement of children at the end of the Reception Year in school is lower than in similar areas, and results in national tests remain below average for 11-year-olds. Although low, results for 16-year-olds have continued to improve well and are close to those of young people in similar areas. Gaps in achievement for children from groups whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are narrowing at the end of primary school and, by the age of 16, this is also the case for pupils who have special educational needs. Nineteen-year-olds, including those from low-income families, do not gain as many qualifications as those from similar backgrounds across the country.

Key areas for further development

- Improve the quality of provision in secondary schools and school sixth forms.
- Improve how well children do at the end of their Reception Year and by the end of primary school.
- Improve the number of young people who gain qualifications at the age of 19, including those from low-income families.

Outcomes for children and young people

Improving health outcomes continues to be an area of considerable challenge. Inspections show nearly all types of services and settings are good at encouraging children and young people to live healthy lives, although secondary schools and local academies do not do as well. The good services for children and young people with emotional or mental health difficulties have improved further and parents of disabled children are pleased with the services provided. There has also been an improvement in reducing the number of girls aged 18 who become pregnant. Although low, the level of screening for chlamydia is in line with the national figure. However, not enough mothers are still breast-feeding after six weeks and, over the last few years, the number of children who are too overweight has risen. Although children say they are not as satisfied with the quality of local parks as children elsewhere, this number has improved and there has been a good and sustained increase in children and young people taking part in sport regularly.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are almost always good. With the exception of childminders, Ofsted's inspections of services and settings confirm this. Good local services work well together and share responsibility to protect children at risk of harm. The most recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found that assessments were clear and detailed, although chronologies were not consistently used to inform current assessments. The local area's review of its Children and Young People's Plan describes improved resources to ensure there are stable placements for children in care. Outcomes from the arrangements to ensure that children are safe within the community show that the number of children and young people who are admitted to hospital because of accidental or deliberate injury reduced well in 2009. The Children and Young People's Plan details a range of local initiatives to engage and educate young people about road safety and the number who are killed or seriously injured is decreasing at around the same rate as found nationally. More young people feel bullied than elsewhere although the local authority reports that specific initiatives are beginning to show improvements.

Almost all services and settings are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. This is not as strong in secondary schools. The number of schools not reaching the expected standards has reduced. However, too few children do well at the end of their Reception Year in school. Improvement was slow between 2007 and 2009, although recently published data show further improvement in 2010. A lack of improvement is also evident at the end of primary school and children do not do as well in national tests as those elsewhere. Standards in secondary schools have risen faster than in similar areas and, by the age of 16, an increasing number of pupils gain five or more good GCSEs in line with young people in similar areas. Provisional data for 2010 show that this improvement is continuing. There has also been a very good rise in the number who achieve two good GCSE grades in science and in those who take science at A level. Behaviour is not as good in as many secondary schools as reported elsewhere. However, the number of secondary pupils who are often absent from school continues to improve and is similar to the number elsewhere.

The Children and Young People's Plan shows a range of ways in which children and young people are involved in planning and reviewing local services. Examples include young people giving their views, helping to create a DVD about domestic violence and by making decisions on funding through local forums. Almost all types of services and settings are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities but this is not as strong in secondary schools and local academies. Rates of re-offending by young people in North East Lincolnshire are high but improving, and by most measures the youth offending service works reasonably well. Over time there has been a good reduction in the number of young people who have been caught breaking the law for the first time, and the number of young people receiving a custodial sentence has decreased significantly. There have been very good improvements in both the number of young people who have offended who are in education, training or work and the number who are found a suitable place to live.

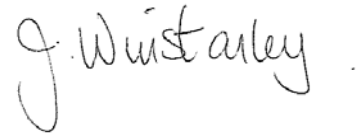
The sixth form college and settings for children and young people whose circumstances have made them more vulnerable are particularly good at helping prepare them for future study, training or work. This area is weak in secondary schools and local academies. The local authority knows that not all young people, including those from low-income families, do as well as they can at the age of 19 and improving standards is a key priority for improvement. The local area has maintained the steady reduction and good performance in the number of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, work or training. There have also been improvements in both the number of care leavers in education, work or training and in the number who are given a suitable place to live when they leave care.

Prospects for improvement

The local authority and its partners have identified the right priorities and the review of its Children and Young People's Plan demonstrates progress in some important areas; it is also clear about what still needs to be done. The most recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found that there continued to be good arrangements for staff training and development and also noted as a strength the positive impact of increased funding for social worker and supervisory posts on reducing caseloads. The inspection also found that the development of a multi-agency co-located domestic violence team had led to earlier identification of children potentially at risk of harm. Partnership working is a clear strength of the area with many examples of joint initiatives, for example: contraception and sexual health services, Safer Roads Humber, the Safer Communities Partnership, and Multi Agency Vehicle for Information Sharing (MAVIS) – a joint project with Humberside Police to provide information on positive activities for young people across North East Lincolnshire on a Friday and Saturday night. Ofsted's monitoring visits to weaker schools show that the local authority is providing considerable support to help them get better. However, there remain weaknesses in the quality of primary schools, in academies and secondary schools, including sixth forms, and in the educational standards reached at all ages.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment