

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Mr Andrew Samson
Director of Children's Services
North East Lincolnshire County
Eleanor Street
Grimsby
North Lincolnshire
DN32 9DU

1 November 2006

Dear Mr Samson

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY 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 ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	2
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

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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 East Lincolnshire Council has been effective in securing an overall improvement in outcomes for children and young people in the last year and the service delivers satisfactory requirements for users. New leadership of the children's services directorate has made a significant contribution to this achievement. A revised management structure, together with new appointments to key posts has further added to the good capacity to improve. A strongly emerging commitment to collaborative working between the social care, education and health services is crucial to realising the council's aspirations within the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). 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.

Being healthy

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. The children's services directorate has developed an integrated and coordinated approach to the provision of services to promote and improve health. The council has shown financial commitment to improving the health of children and young people through the preventative health agenda and positive developments in partnership working with the Primary Care Trust. There is significant corporate commitment to support the health and well-being board which includes strong representation from health. The area of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is acknowledged as an area where outcomes need to be improved in relation to access and waiting times.

The levels of teenage pregnancy are too high but the teenage pregnancy partnership board acknowledge the problem and the need to address this issue has been identified in the CYPP. A financial commitment has been made to support work in other areas where outcomes reflect a priority need. The school advisory service recognises the link between the teaching of personal, social and health education in secondary schools and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. However, procedures for assessing the impact of this provision on outcomes for children and young people lack rigour.

A healthy lifestyle is promoted well in primary schools where a good range of opportunities is available for pupils to participate in physical activity and eat healthy foods. Thirty-seven schools have now met the healthy schools standard although this falls short of the target set for 2006. The health needs of looked after children are well met. A designated nurse for looked after children works closely with the fostering team, foster carers and children. The recent development of children's centres has enhanced access to preventative health services.

Staying safe

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. The Local Safeguarding Children Board has been effective in ensuring that children and young people stay safe. The council has improved or maintained performance across a range of key indicators. Many have achieved or sustained top national band performance levels. Further improvement is required in the proportion of care workers completing the national vocational qualification (NVO) Level 3 for residential child care workers. The council is taking steps to increase staff participation in training. A high priority is given to child protection procedures. Senior managers audit all case files personally and ensure necessary actions are taken. Timely intervention and strong inter-agency collaboration are a feature of work with looked after children. All these children have an allocated qualified social worker. Procedures for child protection registration perform strongly in relation to national indicators and are evidence that a safe system is in operation. Extended schools provide early morning and evening activities and care in a safe environment under the supervision of appropriate adults. The majority of indicators for the placement of adopted children rank outcomes in the highest national performance band. Foster carers receive training around child protection. A high degree of care is taken to ensure best interest placements are made. Senior managers report that the decrease in the percentage of children placed for adoption within 12 months reflects the complexity of cases rather than a decline in service performance. The council has addressed the weakness identified around pre-registration of child minders. An increase in the number of full-time childcare places has improved access to childcare provision.

The council seeks the views of children and young people and, through the Adolescent Lifestyle Survey, have identified a number of areas for further development. For example, a concern expressed by young people about bullying has prompted the council to secure appropriate training for key adults. Compared to the national average, a high proportion of 13 to 19 year olds choose to participate in the provision made by the youth service.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. Many performance indicators improved in 2005 compared to 2004, and the weaknesses identified in the 2005 APA are being tackled systematically. The quality of early years and nursery provision is good. Children are well prepared for primary school.

At Key Stage 1 performance has continued to improve. Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with the national average. Standards in reading and mathematics are above those for similar authorities. At Key Stage 2 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in core subjects at age 11 is in line with the national average. Performance in science is above that of similar authorities. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the primary phase. Outcomes from primary inspections since September 2005 indicate that the integration of education and care is well established and provides a good level of guidance and support. The council has achieved a significant reduction in the number of surplus primary school places.

At Key Stage 3 standards in English, mathematics and science are now broadly in line with those of similar authorities and although below average, the rate of improvement is faster than the national trend. North East Lincolnshire achieved its best ever results at Key Stage 3 in 2005 although there is room for further improvement. At Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils attaining five A* to C grades or equivalent improved faster than the national trend. The achievement of looked after children at age 16 is significantly above that of their peers nationally. Despite an overall improvement in standards across all key stages, outcomes for pupils aged 16 remain unsatisfactory.

A coordinated approach from a multi-disciplinary team has contributed to an overall improvement in attendance. The authority has worked to stress the importance of regular attendance with parents and carers. In the primary phase, attendance is just above the national average. At 90.5% in the secondary phase, attendance is broadly in line with statistical neighbours and reflects an improving trend. In comparison to the national average, unauthorised absence is above in the secondary and below in the primary phase. An improvement in the attendance of looked after children has made a positive contribution to their achievements. A policy of managed moves in preference to permanent exclusion has been agreed with secondary headteachers. Two of the highest excluding schools have received behaviour improvement project intervention to manage internal exclusion. In these schools fixed term exclusion has fallen significantly.

The strategic partnership has worked closely with the school improvement service to build capacity to support underachieving schools. Performance data is used more systematically to identify underachievement by key stage and groups of pupils. However, the outcomes of support are variable. One primary school has recently been removed from serious weaknesses following successful intervention. In a second primary school, despite considerable support, the 2005 data shows a declining trend in standards since 2003. The school improvement service is confident that a third primary school served with a notice to improve is making satisfactory progress. A secondary school placed in special measures in February 2005 is reported to be making satisfactory progress, as is another secondary school where behaviour was identified as a concern. Since 2003 the authority has significantly reduced the number of secondary schools below floor target. The performance of secondary schools is variable. Proposals for three academies in North East Lincolnshire are intended to address underperformance and increase participation post-16.

Provision for pupils with behavioural difficulties at secondary school age is at a point of transition following a pupil referral unit being placed in special measures.

Progress made against the majority of key indicators in the last year does reflect a pattern of improvement. Appropriate strategies for further development are embedded in a children's services directorate which has a strong commitment to multi-agency partnerships. There is effective educational leadership emerging to carry the vision and plans forward.

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. Social inclusion strategies are successful, providing effective support for looked after children and children in foster care. The council has maintained or improved its strong position against the national average for all key performance indicators. Outcomes from school inspections suggest that primary schools provide a good range of opportunities for children to make a positive contribution to the school community and through participation in local events.

Children and young people are involved in decision making through representation on the strategic management board and an elected youth parliament. Residential events have involved young people in action planning and influencing the priorities for the CYPP. The fostering service has been innovative in the range of initiatives to encourage children and young people to be actively involved in events and decisions which affect their lives. The work of the youth offending team is effective, complemented by a good multi-agency approach. Re-offending rates are falling significantly.

Achieving economic well-being

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. Improved collaboration between providers of education and training for 14 to 19 year olds has resulted in more coherent offer which is better matched to the needs of young people. The council leads the 14 to 19 Strategy group which includes representatives from the two post-16 colleges, training providers, Connexions and sixth form consortia. This is a significant move forward. The strategy is focused on: increasing participation, access to education and training, raising attainment, and providing support and guidance for young people. Through the newly created local area partnerships, progression pathways have been mapped and gaps in provision identified and addressed. Much of this work is in the early stages and it is too soon to gauge its impact.

The percentage of care leavers in education, employment and training is very good. The proportion of care leavers who have access to suitable accommodation compares favourably with the national picture. A good proportion of children and young people with disabilities are supported to live independently or with their families in the community. Pupils with a statement of special educational need are well guided in making choices at Key Stage 4. Young teenage mothers are positively encouraged to stay in full-time education. A comprehensive needs analysis has informed an increase in the proportion of full-time day care places and a reduction in sessional places.

Progress into post-16 education is improving and standards achieved by students have risen compared to 2004 but remain below average. Sharper use of data has enabled managers to identify young people at high risk of non-participation at post-16 by specific group or geographical area. Plans for two academies are well advanced. A bid for a third is at an early stage. The education and training provided by these academies has been carefully planned to complement rather than compete with post-16 provision in the two

established colleges. Links with Connexions have targeted support in schools for those young people at risk of becoming disengaged from learning or work.

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

Through the CYPP the council has given a clear commitment to address the Every Child Matters agenda. The council has further consolidated a multi-agency approach to improve outcomes for children and young people. There is better engagement with stakeholders and other agencies and a rapidly developing sense of collaborative working. A new Head of Children's Services and a restructure of management arrangements has stabilised the leadership and added to the capacity of the council to drive further improvement. Priorities are based on sharper practice in using data to inform needs analysis. The strategic partnership, in place for one year, has provided expertise and guidance and is working effectively to build capacity. Greater stability in staffing has been achieved due to a significant reduction in teacher vacancies, an increase in the recruitment and retention of social care workers and fewer working days lost to sickness absence across the council.

The new structures, protocols and procedures have begun to effect change. This is evident in the improvement since 2005 across a large number of key indicators for social care services and many for education. A number of social care indicators which were performing strongly against the national picture have continued to show an upward trend. In the context of an authority with pockets of significant social deprivation, the improvement made in one year is notable. Nevertheless, attainment remains too low between the ages of 11 and 19. The change for children board has been effective in contributing to the delivery of the Community Strategy. A notable strength is the outcomes achieved by the services for vulnerable groups such as looked after children. The CYPP provides a good forum for sharing priorities based on improved levels of analysis and consultation, including the engagement of the council for young people.

Increased accountability is linked to a performance management framework. Work on target setting has begun, but the link between corporate targets, national performance indicators and individual service plans is not consistent. The self-assessment demonstrates good capacity to be evaluative. The council has a realistic view of the strengths and areas for development in education and social care services 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"> • health of looked after children • promotion of healthy lifestyles by primary schools. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage pregnancy rates • CAMHS • systems for assessing the quality of outcomes from the personal, social and health education provision in secondary schools.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy and practice around child protection • safety and stability of looked after children in foster placements and adoption • adoptions of looked after children • participation by 13 to 19 year olds in youth service provision. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ Level 3 training – caring for children and young people.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early years provision and outcomes at Key Stages 1 and 2 • the proportion of care leavers in employment, education and training at age 19 • primary school attendance • children's centres offer an integrated service provision in areas of greatest need. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievement and standards at age 16 • performance of some secondary schools • unauthorised absence in secondary schools.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rates of warning and convictions of looked after children • participation in decision making by children and young people • opportunities for primary school children to participate in community activities • participation of young people in individual reviews. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vulnerable children are empowered to achieve economic independence and 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational attainment at 14 to 19 requires improvement

<p>well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all looked after children post-15 have pathway plans • percentage of care leavers in employment, education and training at age 19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further increase participation rates post-16.
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-assessment that is evaluative • multi-agency collaboration in service provision • management of social care services to achieve a high level of outcomes • capacity to improve. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management of the school advisory service to effect improvement in secondary schools • consistent use of targets to inform performance management at all levels.

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

- How effectively the strategies to reduce teenage pregnancy have been implemented.
- How well the procedures for assessing the impact of personal, social and health education have improved to promote healthy lifestyles.
- Have attendance rates continued to improve.
- How effectively has the school improvement service consistently contributed to raising standards for children and young people aged 11 to 19.

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 and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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