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Mr Kim Bromley-Derry
Interim Executive Director for Children and Young People's Services
London Borough of Newham
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Dear Mr Bromley-Derry

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Newham 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	3
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	2
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

The London Borough of Newham delivers good services which exceed minimum requirements for children and young people. Some good partnership working across a range of services has enabled the council to sustain at least an adequate performance in all of the outcome areas and good performance in some. Accurate identification of priorities and effective partnerships has contributed to improved commissioning arrangements. There has been good progress against the joint area review (JAR) and APA recommendations and despite a dip in outcomes for making a positive contribution the council’s capacity to improve remains good.

Good joint working with health services is contributing to good outcomes for children and young people, including mental health and specialist services. There has been good progress in the number of schools achieving the Healthy School status. Staying safe outcomes are good although the timeliness of initial assessments and reviews of children subject to a child protection plan are below the average found in comparable councils and the national average. Children and young people enjoy school, behave well and secondary school attendance is consistently high. Standards in schools are rising at a rate faster than nationally and educational achievement is generally good. However, standards remain below average, particularly in primary schools and for looked after children. Improvements in recent years in achievement at Level 2 and 3 by 19-year-olds are good.

Being healthy

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.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive and accessible child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) including specialist services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. ▪ Good progress with the number of schools achieving national Healthy School status and effective prioritisation of healthy lifestyles. ▪ The health needs of looked after children are effectively monitored and assessed.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teenage pregnancy rates are high and Newham is unlikely to reach the 50% reduction rate target by 2010. ▪ High infant mortality rates remain a concern.

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A culture of safeguarding is well embedded and partnership working is effective including partnerships with the voluntary sector and faith groups. ▪ Clear thresholds demonstrated by the high proportion of referrals which led to initial assessments. ▪ Good multi-agency joint working contribute to secure and stable placements for looked after children. ▪ Good adoption rates, including the number of children adopted from Black and minority ethnic groups.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial assessments are not undertaken in a sufficiently timely way ▪ The percentage of reviews of children subject to a child protection plan completed within timescales is lower than the average found in similar council areas.

Enjoying and achieving

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.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rate of improvement in standards in all key stages is above the national trend in almost all respects. ▪ Children and young people make good progress during their time in school. The proportion of primary and secondary schools with significantly positive CVA is much higher than national and Key Stages 2 to 4 CVA is well above the national average. ▪ Primary school attendance is improving and secondary school attendance is exceptionally high.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of primary schools below floor targets in English rose from five to 12 and the number of primary schools below floor targets in mathematics rose from 14 to 17. ▪ The educational performance of looked after children is too low.

Making a positive contribution

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"> ▪ There is good involvement of young people at a strategic level and the council's commitment to widening participation and strengthening the voice of vulnerable groups is strong, including children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. ▪ A good range of alternative provision to reduce anti-social and offending behaviour.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council acknowledges that the youth offending service is under-performing. For example, data on the number of first-time offenders has been unreliable. ▪ The council does not sufficiently meet the statutory requirement to involve looked after children in their reviews. The proportion of looked after children involved in their statutory reviews has fallen and is below similar councils.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvements to the 14–19 curriculum range including the successful introduction of all five diplomas. ▪ The proportion of care leavers who are engaged in education, employment or training is very good. ▪ Improvement in achievement at Level 2 and 3 for 19-year-olds in recent years is far greater than found nationally. The gap between the averages achieved nationally and those in Newham have almost halved.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The overall National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) success rate for all work based learners is well below the national rate and the rate of improvement is slower. ▪ The NVQ timely success rate is about half the rate nationally and is falling, while nationally it is rising.

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 adequate. Ambition is strong and is shared among officers and elected members.

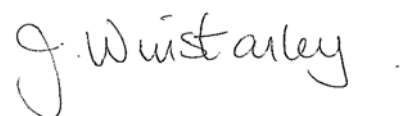
Local area agreement targets have a clear focus on children and young people and are aligned appropriately with the priorities identified in the council's CYPP. Effective partnership working across agencies has contributed to improved performance in some of the areas identified in the APA 2007, for example better working with the Primary Care Trust has resulted in improved targeted and universal services. The School Improvement Service engages well with schools and effectively promotes their capacity to improve and communication with schools has improved. Value for money is good. The timeliness of statutory reviews for looked after children and their participation in those reviews is not good enough. While new management structures and ways of working have been established it is too early to determine the impact of changes on the under-performing youth offending service.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear vision for improvement and ambition is strong. ▪ Services are based on identified priorities and meet the needs of the local community very well. ▪ Partnership working is strong and reflects universal and targeted needs.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The youth offending service.

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



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection