

9 December 2009

Mr John Collings
Executive Director of Children's Services
Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Civic Centre
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8PU

Dear Mr Collings

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating 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, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Performs Adequately (2)
-----------------------------------	--------------------------------

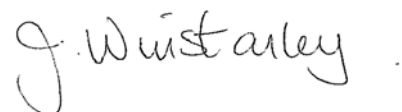
Children's services in Newcastle upon Tyne City Council perform adequately.

Children get off to a good start, with a very large proportion of childminders and childcare settings that are good or better. The proportion of Newcastle's nursery schools that are good or better is close to the national average. A smaller proportion of primary schools than in similar areas and found nationally is rated good or better. An above average proportion of secondary schools, including the schools' sixth forms, are good or better compared with similar areas and nationally. Four of the local authority's five special schools are good or better and one is adequate. The pupil referral unit is good. The fostering and adoption agencies are good. However, three out of the four children's homes are inadequate and this has been pivotal in arriving at the overall rating for children's services.

Performance against the national indicators is much improved and a large majority, including those for staying safe and enjoy and achieve, are in line with or above similar areas and national averages. The completion of children in need assessments within the required timescales is now in line with similar areas and England as a whole. National test results at age 11 have improved steadily and are now in line with similar areas and the national average. Achievement at age 16 has also improved and this good trend means that Newcastle is now in line with similar areas, but results remain below the national average. There are some inequalities in the achievement of children from minority ethnic backgrounds and children whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Achievement of a level 2 or 3 qualification by age 19 is close to the national figure and the authority has successfully reduced the proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

Yours sincerely



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA