



Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Colleagues

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on Monday 25 July to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your 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.

Being healthy

The outcomes in this area are excellent. The council has a ten-year teenage pregnancy strategy and action plan in line with Every Child Matters, which encompasses joint working, the provision of appropriate educational input and support. There are some wards that are recognised by high levels of deprivation where the pregnancy rates are relatively high. However, resources are being targeted to these areas including Brooke's clinics and support from pharmacies. There is evidence that demonstrates that the targets set in the ten-year plan are being met. Further evidence of the council's commitment is the appointment of a Teenage Pregnancy Consultant funded through the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Fund.

There is further evidence of the council's commitment to partnership working in its Drugs and Alcohol Strategy. The inception of the Fletcher House project sees a range of services including statutory and voluntary sector providers under one roof.

All schools in Milton Keynes have achieved high levels of participation in sport. 85% of schools have registered with the Milton Keynes Healthy Schools Award Scheme, which equates to National Healthy Schools Status.

The mental health needs of children and young people are well served. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service has an inter-agency strategy that promotes good

practice. There is concern about the number of staff employed in CAMHS. The Council intends to increase resources by one full time equivalent social worker which will still see a level that is below that of other comparable authorities. However, the resource commitment to the CAMHS team includes a Service Manager, an Educational Psychologist, an Primary Mental Health Worker and two Family Support Workers. The council took a strategic decision to increase resources to Tier 2 services to address waiting times. This has been successful.

An alternative strategy is to be put into place to address the limited availability and requirement of Tier 4 services. Milton Keynes had access to one bed in Oxford but this was a Thames Valley wide resource. A short-term solution has been found by utilising a bed in an adult unit while opportunities to purchase on a block basis are explored. Support is to be given via a planned Community Intensive Outreach Team. This alternative strategy is in place to address the shortcomings of the initial developments. The development in 00/01 was as part of a Thames Valley wide approach. Milton Keynes has access to a residential bed in theory but in practice this was not the case because the bed was never vacant. Milton Keynes decided to address this shortage by initially taking the bed at the Campbell centre. In addition, Milton Keynes spot purchases beds in a range of facilities as need is identified.

All looked after children are offered health assessments and the uptake by looked after children in Milton Keynes for health assessments is above comparator councils and the national picture. Work is being undertaken to update the 'Health of Looked After Children Health Plan'.

The council has taken steps to promote social inclusion. Their Hidden Disabilities scheme is recognised nationally as a model of good practice. There is also a specialist nurse working with the children of travellers as well as one promoting social inclusion.

Considerable effort is being made to encourage the widest possible participation in healthy lifestyle activities, which includes a range of activities aimed at children and young people with physical, emotional and learning disabilities. The youth service funds, organises or promotes 27 projects supporting healthy lifestyles. The Milton Keynes Youth Action Group has a wide representation of children in Milton Keynes although there is little evidence that the views of looked after children influence policy and strategies that affect them.

Staying safe

The outcomes in this area are satisfactory.

The care of pupils, welfare and health and safety are all assessed as good or very good. There are child protection systems in place in all schools in Milton Keynes with the exception of special schools. Only one special school was inspected though and this is

recommended as an area of exploration at a Joint Area Review. Police officers work in half of the secondary schools, which has had a positive effect on safety.

A multi-agency anti bullying scheme has reached over 6000 pupils in its first year. There is peer support and mediation schemes in place and where there are identified problems within schools, resources are targeted to combat this. This has been seen in one school where work has been done with bullies and the victims of bullying, with positive results. They are also targeting racist incidents effectively.

There was some evidence of the council's performance in initial assessment and planning for children not making the right sort of progress. In 2004/05 the percentage of core assessments completed in 35 days had declined sharply since 2003/04 and was well below the average for comparable councils. This was in a context of the council undertaking a significantly lower percentage of such assessments than comparable councils. Compared to 2002/03 the percentage of initial assessments completed in 7 days had declined sharply and was below the average for comparable councils.

The number of children on the child protection register and the number registered in the year continued to be very low compared to the average of comparable Councils. We concluded that this was at least in part because of good preventative services. But we caution the council to ensure that the criteria for registration is not set too high. The percentage of re-registrations during the year was high and may indicate that in 2003/04 some children had been taken off the register before sufficiently effective work with them had been completed (the data for 2003/04 supports this hypothesis). Performance in reviewing child protection cases was very good (albeit within the context of a relatively small number on the register).

Aspects of the council's performance within its systems for looked after children needed improving. Only 72.4% of looked after children had a named qualified social worker. This was a decline since 2003/04 and was well below the average of comparable councils. The council's plan for 2005/06 would keep it well below this average. The council stated that it allocated low risk stable cases to unqualified social workers. Our conclusion was that looked after children in Milton Keynes would be better served if a much higher percentage of them were allocated to qualified social workers.

The council was not doing well in its performance in providing stability of placements, incorporating the views of children in reviews, and ensuring looked after children receive educational qualifications.

The council has increased the number of fostering and adoption placements. A CSCI inspection report into the Local Authority Fostering Service shows good performance that was commended by foster carers for the support that they received.

Enjoying and achieving

The outcomes for this area are satisfactory.

In early years provision, places and providers are growing faster than the national rate. There has been a 16% increase in providers and a 25% increase in places, which is in line with the growth that Milton Keynes is experiencing. Performance of providers in areas of disadvantage is good. Registration times are also faster than the national average. There is no unsatisfactory or unacceptable provision and all multiple day care types are good or better. However, the proportion of good childminders is below average as is the proportion of good sessional child care providers and the proportion of very good full day care is low. During 2004/05, progress has been made with support and training for early years settings with the provision of a high quality early learning pack and the introduction of shared case files and common visit forms for the Foundation Stage in schools and settings.

There is evidence of partnerships working together to improve the quality of education provision and that targeted work on school improvement has led to the reduction in the number of schools causing concern. Rates of improvements for targeted schools exceed rates of improvement for schools as a whole. Excellence Cluster schools make greater progress than other schools.

However, the APA summary sheet for 2005 shows that overall, schools that have been judged to be underachieving since 2000 are higher than the national average. Overall, standards in schools still need to be improved and particularly at Key Stage (KS) 2 and in a number of secondary schools.

At KS1 early intervention is reaping benefits in results; there were strong improvements in KS1 in 2004. Improvements in reading writing and maths are all greater than the national averages and boys' performance is now stronger. At KS1, for the first time at any stage, the LEA is performing above national averages. However, at KS2 although there appear to be significant gains in writing, reading has suffered.

The average Key Stage 2 to 3 value-added measures for 2004 was above that nationally. Pupils made progress to level 5 or above in English, mathematics and science and to higher levels in mathematics and science that was at least in line with national rates of progress. However, the average progress made by medium and higher attaining pupils in English was below national rates.

The percentages of pupils who gained no passes at GCSE in 2003 and 2004 were lower than national figures. GCSE performance for one secondary school is below the national floor target.

Except for Key Stage 1, standards in Milton Keynes are below those nationally. However, from 1998 to 2004 the improvement in performance at Key Stages 1 and 3 and at GCSE placed Milton Keynes first amongst its statistical neighbours.

Key Stage 2 test results in English and mathematics at level 4 or above remain below national levels, as do results in English for level 5 or above. The local authority has recognised that low standards at Key Stage 2 are a major issue for Milton Keynes and is deploying a range of relevant measures to tackle this concern. This includes focused intervention work with schools and major school re-organisation from 2005.

The number of authorised absences from secondary schools is still too high. The number of permanent exclusions from primary schools in 2003/04 put Milton Keynes in the bottom 10% nationally. There was a fall in the number of primary school exclusions from 17 to 13 in 2004/05. In secondary schools, following a fall in exclusions from 26 in 2003/04 to 19 in 2003/04 they rose to 35 in 2004/05, although this was largely down to two schools only. National comparators are not yet available.

The provision and support offered to students in alternative provision is good and the number remaining in alternative provision for more than one year is well below the national average. The attainment of minority ethnic groups has improved and the value added measures are now above the national average. There is also good support for pupils who transfer at non-standard times with an ongoing reduction in attainment gaps between mobile and stable pupils at KS's 1&2. Students who transfer at non standard times are well supported to enable them to make appropriate progress.

The educational attainment of looked after children was a weakness. Although this is a small cohort of students, the statistics indicate that they were less likely than looked after children in comparator authorities to sit GCSE's, and those who did were less likely to gain five or more GCSE's. Although, some students did obtain GCSE's a year early or achieved AS Level, which were not included in the statistics.

There were clear improvements in achievement in 2003/04 for pupils with SEN on every measure. In the Audit Commission Survey several responses place SEN in the top quartile nationally.

Making a positive contribution

The outcomes in this area are good. There is strong evidence of a culture of encouraging young people to express their views in forums such as school Councils, youth parliament and pupil participation groups. There is also a Young Peoples Feedback fortnight and a Young People's Annual Conference and a Children's Rights service with Barnardos. The Connexions Partnership has developed a youth participation scheme that is working well. However, Milton Keynes has only achieved 63.9% of looked after children expressing their views, which is well below average and

the lowest in its comparator group and is an area which should be improved upon. However, there is evidence of focus groups made up of care leavers to look at policy and procedures and LAC have participated in staff recruitment. There is also a looked after children advocacy service in conjunction with Spurgeons.

There are satisfactory arrangements for improving behaviour in schools with behaviour support plans.

Final warnings and reprimands for looked after children, while reducing, is still above the comparator group. The explanation for this was an increase in activity by Thames Valley Police that has had a disproportionate effect on this group. The Youth Offending figures also saw an increase due to this strategy by the police.

Achieving economic well-being

The outcomes in this area are good. Milton Keynes is a vibrant community with plans in place for considerable growth. The views of children and young people are valued in the process of planning for the future. They are encouraged and facilitated to contribute to pathway plans, transition plans and consultation around the future growth of Milton Keynes.

In the census week, the council provided slightly less than the average of comparable councils with respect to numbers of children in need with disabilities (other than those looked after) provided with social service by the council. Also in the census week the council provided no direct payments to such children and their families. While the council stated that this was a case of parents exercising choice, performance was well below the average of comparable councils.

The Employment, Education and Training figures are high in Milton Keynes, in comparison with both the regional and national picture, although the targets were met. Milton Keynes has an active 14-19 strategic group that has helped to formulate the 14-19 strategic plan. Opportunities for 14-19 year olds have increased since 2002. However, the percentage of young people progressing into education or work-based training, although increasing, remains lower than the national average. The council explained that the high level of employment opportunities in the service sector means that young people could choose paid employment rather than continuing within education or training. The introduction of the Increased Flexibility Programme has provided greater access to Level 1 and 2 vocational programmes. Although the NEET figure has dropped by 24.6% between 2002 and 2004, exceeding the government's target of 10% for the same period, and the last two years have seen a drop from 15.5% in 2003 to 10.2 in May 2005, it is still high against a regional average of 6% and a national average of 8.4%. The percentage of young people progressing into education, training or employment is lower than the national average. In order to try to address this, Milton Keynes is working with the Local Learning and Skills Council to re-establish a

MKOB ETE Advisory Group. There has been a steady increase to 50% of care leavers in ETE so Milton Keynes is in line with its comparator group.

Care leavers are provided with good support. They are allocated an advisor and all looked after children over 15 years of age have a Pathway Plan and transition plan, which they are involved in drawing up. There is a support group for looked after children and members of the group have received relevant training. Care leavers are allocated an advisor, receive good support and are encouraged in to education, training or employment. As a result, there has been a steady increase in the numbers in education, training or employment.

Children and Young People with either special educational needs or disabilities receive support from the Connexions Partnership. The YMCA has formulated a children and young people group that coordinates the voluntary sector's input into the young people's strategy group.

The Aim Higher programme has been extended to include all schools with sixth forms in Milton Keynes and sixth form numbers are increasing although the average points score achieved remains low. This is an area of concern.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • joint working improving outcomes for health for children • health of ALL children including looked after children, education in schools • drug and alcohol services. • strategies to deal with teenage pregnancy. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnicity - targeting hard to reach groups • management of LAC – high numbers of fostering (with family) • pro-active approach to bullying. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initial assessments in 7 days and core assessments in 35 days • numbers of children with a named social worker • placement stability.

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong improvements in KS1 • SEN improvement and attainment • number of students in alternative provision for more than 1 year • improved attainment of minority ethnic groups • targeted management action to improve specified schools • rate of improvement for Key Stages 1, 3 and 4 compared to statistical neighbours. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational attainment of looked after children and Youth Offenders • permanent Exclusions in secondary schools • test results on English Level 4+, English Level 5+, Maths Level 4.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consulting and engaging children and young people views, including SEN and other hard to reach groups • joint working, especially with voluntary sector. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looked after children who communicated their views.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support to care leavers. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p>

Service management

Milton Keynes faces considerable challenge in that the population is growing rapidly, with the numbers of children rising by around 20% in the coming years.

Milton Keynes is conscious of these demands and has clear strategies in place that are the product of good consultation, research and needs analysis. The council's vision for the future is captured in 'The City that thinks differently' (which has involved consultation with Children and Young People). The Milton Keynes Community Strategy 2004 –2034 is a major piece of work that encapsulates the vision and ambitions of the city via the LSP process.

The council intends to create management capacity by restructuring its social services making Children's Services and Education co-terminus leading to the creation of a Children's Trust in time.

There is an ambitious schools building programme in place with four new schools having opened this year. Full staffing of the new schools has been achieved. The council are taking steps to ensure that the current workforce is well motivated through training and

supervision. This is supported by evidence of low staff turnover and low vacancy rates although there are higher sickness rates in some areas. Even accepting the success in recruiting to the new schools, the expansion agenda will pose significant difficulties for Milton Keynes. However, their risk assessment of the anticipated growth and appropriate strategic planning is to be commended. There are also no major difficulties in recruiting social workers.

Milton Keynes repeatedly shows that where there are problem areas, either identified internally or externally through inspections, it will channel resources to these. It has an excellent track record of achieving results this way.

There is concern expressed by the council that they are not receiving sufficient funding to address the many challenges posed by the growth agenda.

Recent inspection findings show that Milton Keynes performs well within the current set of demands. There has been sound analysis of need resulting in a clear vision and an effective strategy however, developing capacity to keep pace with the anticipated growth will be extremely testing for the elected members and the senior management. However, there is a commitment and enthusiasm from this group to take the council forward through this challenging time.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health:

- staffing resources in CAMHS service.

Staying safe

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- child protection in special schools
- allocation of qualified social workers
- initial and core assessment timescales
- re-registrations onto the CP register
- placement stability.

Enjoying and achieving

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:

- attainment of LAC and Youth Offenders.

Educational provision is made for children who do not attend school:

- secondary exclusions.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to make a positive contribution:

- eliciting the views of LAC.

Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:

- reprimands and final warnings for LAC.

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- further education provision.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Milton Keynes Borough Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	2
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	2
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 capacity to improve its services 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	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate