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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Redmayne

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN MIDDLESBROUGH BOROUGH 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	3
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

Middlesbrough Borough Council makes good provision for children and young people. There is a strong vision, a clear recognition of what still needs to be improved and a firm commitment to achieving better outcomes for children and young people. The council can demonstrate that its targeted actions have resulted in tangible benefits for children, young people and their families. Although some outcomes are not yet good enough, such as the standards in secondary schools, there has been continued improvement, often at a faster rate than found nationally or in similar authorities. The Department of Children, Families and Learning has a good strategic overview of its work and its forward planning is effective, taking into account the significant changes and challenges which the council faces. However, this is not always reflected clearly or consistently in its plans. The council's work is well informed by its consultation with children, young people and their families. The range and quality of consultation is a strength, as is the relationship with the council's partners; both are contributing to some significantly improved outcomes for children and young people. The council has taken action to improve the weaker areas identified in last year's APA, such as its use of data, educational support for looked after children and reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or after the age of 16. The council has good capacity to improve its services further.

Being healthy

The contribution of the council's children's services towards improving the health of children and young people is good. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Sure Start are working in partnership to support parents to keep their children healthy. Good outcomes have been achieved on increasing breastfeeding and on pregnant women giving up smoking. Sure Start is now particularly successful in making contact with and supporting parents from the Black and minority ethnic community. Good progress has been made on the number of schools achieving the Healthy Schools Standard. Schools are performing well in helping learners to be healthy. They are working with a range of organisations, including the PCT, to promote wider participation in sport and physical activity and to promote healthy lifestyles. There has been a good response to healthy eating initiatives. In addition, the high level of obesity in children and young people is being monitored by regular screening of children. Dental health is being promoted effectively through the 'Brush for Life' initiative.

The council is making significant efforts, through a multi-agency Teenage Pregnancy Strategy group, to reduce levels of teenage conceptions. Despite this, levels have been increasing for the past two years and are now at their highest since 1999. Drug and alcohol misuse by pregnant teenagers and women is an increasing problem. The council is a high focus area for substance misuse. Treatment services are specifically designed for young people and, although the take up of these services is relatively high compared with the national average, it is low compared with the regional average. Good attention is being paid to ensuring young people are well informed about risks to their health. In addition to schools' personal, social and health education programmes, the SECOS project (Sexually Exploited Children On the Streets) is helping to ensure pupils are better informed about sexual health and risk-taking behaviour. A screening and referral protocol to ensure early identification and referral is in place and staff working with vulnerable young people are

being trained in its use and in the delivery of brief intervention therapies for alcohol and cannabis abuse. A specialist Families First team has been developed to reduce the instances of children and young people becoming looked after as a result of substance misuse by parents.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is much improved. It now provides good support arrangements for young people with mental health needs, including those with urgent needs, and services for all looked after children. Waiting times for specialist CAMHS services have now improved substantially and no young person has to wait more than 10 weeks for a non-urgent service. The service is providing a substantial training programme for carers and schools to help them support children in need of counselling for emotional problems. The council is working to improve the access of older children to adult mental health services.

There is good provision for the health of looked after children, in partnership with the PCT. This includes comprehensive health assessments for individual children. There is appropriate training on health issues for all carers, supported by written guidance. The fostering service works well with foster carers to ensure that children's health needs are met. The health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are addressed through thorough processes and planning.

Staying safe

The council's children's services make a good contribution towards promoting and securing the safety of children and young people. The self-assessment shows that the council has responded well to the concern in the 2005 APA that there was insufficient use of data analysis to inform strategic planning within this outcome. This year, the analysis is much improved. The council has also managed to extend its work with some groups. There has been particular success in work with the black and minority ethnic community, including that of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in promoting children's safety. Council services are now sensitively tailored to suit the black and minority ethnic communities, complementing their cultural strengths and working in partnership to develop trust. This approach is having considerable success.

The council is maintaining the high profile of its anti-bullying work, through an extensive range of measures. An anti-bullying culture is growing and schools are increasingly committing more resources to the issue. The council's most recent pupil survey indicates that, although it is still a high priority for them, young people are now less concerned about bullying than they were. The council acknowledges that this is an area for continuing development.

The council has a good record of children in need assessments and child protection registration processes, despite high overall volumes. The number of child protection registrations has risen during the year, but the high level of de-registrations has meant that the overall number of children on the register has fallen. The high number of children on the Child Protection Register reflects the high incidence of neglect, substance misuse and domestic violence in the area. There is a relatively high proportion of black and minority ethnic children on the register. All child protection cases are now reviewed within

the required timescale and all cases are allocated a social worker. Extensive systems are now in place to monitor and track children who may be missing from school or home, or moving between council areas. The council is working well in partnership with Barnardos to support young people and families affected by sexual abuse and the risk of sexual exploitation.

The number of looked after children is high and the council is trying to reduce this through more effective early intervention. There has been improvement in the long term stability of placements, but this has been affected by the use of emergency foster parents. The council is now trying to avoid the use of these placements in order to limit the number of moves for children. In addition, the fostering service is encouraging recruitment from minority ethnic communities to broaden the range of foster placements it can offer. Residential care is commissioned from the private sector and is of excellent quality. The proportion of children adopted or fostered is very high, to the extent that it threatens to limit the choice of alternative placements, such as residential care, available to children. There have been longer than average delays in the time taken to complete adoptions. Despite the council having considerable success in recruiting potential adoptive parents, there are still difficulties in finding a suitable match for some children.

There is good care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The organisation, planning and support systems for these children are well matched to their needs. Almost all looked after children with a disability aged 14 and over have a transition plan to support their transition from children's to adults' services. Annual inspection reports for the authority's residential unit for children with disabilities have all been positive.

The council's implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is progressing well. There has been substantial training and the developments now have considerable impetus. Procurement of an Integrated Children's System is also well advanced and the council is optimistic that the system will be in place by the target date of January 2007.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution of the authority's children's services to ensuring children and young people achieve at schools, and enjoy their education and leisure activities, is good. The authority has a good track record in raising standards across all key stages and the rates of improvement have, for the most part, been higher than the national rates. Provision for the youngest children is generally good and helps them to make good progress towards the early learning goals. Although there is continuous improvement in the standards reached by pupils, the authority acknowledges that they are still too low, notably in secondary schools. The standards reached in English at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with national averages and standards in mathematics and science are comparable to those in similar authorities. Value-added measures from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 show that pupils make better progress than the national average. Despite improvements in 2005, standards at Key Stage 3 remain well below national averages and, in English and science, below those in similar authorities. There is a similar picture of improvement at GCSE, but standards are below those found nationally. Value-added measures indicate lower than average progress from Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4. The achievement of boys

and, at some key stages, of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is markedly lower than that of their peers. However, the provisional results for 2006 national tests indicate that standards have again risen.

The local authority has a very detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the performance of its schools, informed by good analysis of data. This information is used well to target support. The authority can demonstrate measurable improvements in pupils' achievements, as well as in their attitudes to learning and their enjoyment as a result of their work with schools. One such example is a well-targeted, short-term programme which produced sustained improvement in the reading ability of boys. Inspection outcomes are generally good, especially for primary schools, and no mainstream schools are in Ofsted categories of concern.

Although attendance is not yet good enough, robust strategies are in place to tackle this and the attendance of the majority of targeted pupils is improving. Behaviour is generally good in schools. Exclusions are low from the maintained schools, but the overall total is adversely affected by the higher proportion of exclusions from the academies. This puts pressure on the amount of educational provision available for these pupils and accounts for the lower than average proportion of excluded pupils who have full-time education. The quality of provision for excluded primary and Key Stage 3 pupils is satisfactory or better, as indicated in recent inspections. The Key Stage 4 pupil referral unit and hospital school have recently received adverse inspection outcomes. The authority had acted to redress identified weaknesses prior to the inspections and is continuing to take rigorous action to improve provision.

Provision for other vulnerable children, including looked after children, is improving. There has been significant improvement in the proportion of looked after children who have a personal education plan, which was a weakness at the time of the 2005 APA; all except those who became looked after very recently have a plan. The educational outcomes for these children remain variable, as does their attendance. The authority has identified the reasons for drops in attendance. There are now more robust tracking systems in place and schools' provision for these pupils is challenged routinely.

There is good strategic planning of school places to manage the projected fall in pupil numbers. The plans for new and refurbished schools give a high priority to inclusion, to improving facilities for children and their families and to making best use of resources.

Inspection evidence indicates that children are happy at school and that schools provide a good range of additional activities. The development of extended schools is enhancing this provision. The authority has evidence of increasing numbers of pupils participating in leisure activities and, in consultation with children and young people, is improving the range of these activities and the ease of access to them.

Making a positive contribution

The council's contribution to outcomes in this area is good. Children and young people are supported to develop socially and emotionally through various initiatives. These include the Sure Start Nurturing Parents programme, the Positive Actions for Young People

programme run by Connexions, and various school-based social and emotional development programmes. The youth service also supports young people through a wide range of programmes and a high proportion of young people in the town are reached by the service. The council is providing good support to help children and young people to deal with changes and challenges in their lives. This includes supporting children experiencing loss and bereavement, young carers, minority ethnic groups, children who 'go missing' from home, as well as comprehensive support for young people as they prepare to leave school.

One of the council's strengths is the range of opportunities it provides for children and young people to make a positive contribution to their community. The Mayor's Young People's Focus Group is a successful example, which also reflects the level of commitment to consultation with young people. Some significant improvements have resulted from the consultation and decision-making in which young people have been engaged. These include the establishing of a skateboard park, alternative Halloween and Bonfire night activities, improvements to late night transport systems, and a youth café.

The council has worked well with its partners to reduce the risk of young people becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and crime. Local 'hot spots' have been targeted and the youth offending team (YOT) has worked with individual young people at risk. The rate of re-offending by young people has risen very slightly but is still lower than comparator councils. Preventative work to reduce offending and re-offending includes support for parents, both on a voluntary basis and for those who are subject to statutory Parenting Orders through the courts. The level of offending of looked after children is well below the level of comparator councils.

There is good support to enable vulnerable children and young people to express their views. Although the overall level of participation of looked after children in reviews has dropped, the fostering service is good at consulting with young people, their families and with foster carers. Almost all children say that their foster carers consult them about their care and the things they do. Looked after young people have helped to influence policy and practice by being involved in a review of local drug services and the documentation used in looked after reviews. Person-centred planning, and transition planning, for children with disabilities is being developed in response to criticism from families. Children with learning disabilities who have communication difficulties are helped to communicate their views effectively. A number of young people have also contributed to a review of complaints procedures. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in transition to post-16 provision by transition coordinators and a forum.

Achieving economic well-being

The contribution of the authority's children's services to enabling children and young people to achieve economic well-being is good. Although outcomes for all young people are not yet sufficiently high, there are marked improvements. There is also better provision to enable young people to participate and succeed in education, training and employment. There has been significant progress in the 14 to 19 strategy in the last year. Partnership work is more coherent and is resulting in tangible benefits for young people. There have been significant improvements to curriculum provision, such as the increased

range of vocational options which will be available for Key Stage 4 pupils from September 2006, including access to courses in other schools and colleges. All 14 year-old pupils now have a personal learning plan.

The council and its partners have taken clear steps to improve the opportunities available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities post-16, which was an area for development in 2005. Person-centred planning is now in place for these young people. Support, guidance and student tracking, including by the Connexions service, have improved for all young people, but especially for vulnerable groups. There are dedicated personal advisers for looked after children. One benefit of the improved support has been the significant reduction in the number of students not in education, employment or training and the proportion whose destination is unknown. NEET has moved from being one of the highest nationally to being in line with neighbouring authorities. Another improvement has been the proportion of young people gaining qualifications through work-based learning. Although the number involved is relatively small, it represents improving provision for disaffected and vulnerable students, including looked after children. The authority is making increasingly effective use of direct payments to support its young people and help them to access education and training. This is contributing to increased participation, including that of young people of minority ethnic heritage.

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

The leadership and management of services for children and young people are good and are resulting in tangible benefits for children and young people. Leaders demonstrate a strong vision and commitment to improvement. They know the community, its schools and services well and use this knowledge to identify priorities, and to plan and target their work. The quality and use of data have developed significantly. This improvement is one example of the council's very positive response to the areas for improvement identified in the 2005 APA. Data are used effectively to inform strategic planning as well as to focus activities. There is good strategic thinking to respond to known changes in the population and its needs, as illustrated in the council's well-developed planning for school places. There is also ongoing work to maximise the use of resources, including expertise, to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Much effort has been focused this year on building the joint directorate and establishing a shared understanding of priorities. This, and the practice which accompanies it, is an improving area. However, the links and connections are not always explicit in documentation, as indicated by some inconsistencies in the council's plans.

Good account is taken of the views of children, young people and their parents and carers in planning provision. The range and extent of consultation, and the actions taken in response, are a strength of the council's work with children and young people. Another strength is its work with external partners. Some of these partnerships are markedly more effective than at the time of the 2005 APA, as in the case of the 14 to 19 partnership.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the work of Sure Start, especially that with Black and minority ethnic families promoting healthy lifestyles CAMHS support for the health of looked after children. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teenage pregnancy rates substance abuse.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with the black and minority ethnic community to promote children's safety measures to reduce bullying the management of child protection implementation of the CAF. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the range of placements available for looked after children.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> year-on-year improvements to standards across all key stages the impact of targeted programmes on raising the achievement of groups of pupils, including boys and pupils of minority ethnic heritage improved attendance. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> value-added scores from Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4 the gap in achievement between boys and girls.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the involvement of children and young people in providing information and influencing decisions low levels of offending by looked after children. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the participation of looked after children in reviews.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> progress in implementing the 14 to 19 strategy, resulting from stronger partnership work reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> achievement of pupils at Key Stage 4 and post-16.
<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the vision for and commitment to improvement improved use of data to inform planning and activities the effectiveness of work with partners consultation with children and young people. 	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the clarity and consistency of plans

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

Being healthy

- Teenage pregnancy rates.

Enjoying and achieving

- Achievement and standards in secondary schools.
- The achievement of boys.

Achieving economic well-being

- The impact of the 14 to 19 strategy on standards of achievement and participation rates, including those of vulnerable young people.

Management of children's services

- The clarity and consistency of plans.

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

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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