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17 December 2008

Ms Pauline Newman
Director of Children's Services
Manchester City Council
PO Box 536
Town Hall Extension
Manchester
M60 2AF

Dear Ms Newman

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Manchester City Council 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	2
Being healthy	2
Staying safe	2
Enjoying and achieving	2
Making a positive contribution	2
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	2

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 2

Manchester City Council delivers services for children and young people that meet minimum requirements and are adequate overall. The council’s capacity to improve is adequate. During the period between the JAR in 2006 and the APA in 2007 a number of significant changes in senior personnel occurred. The leadership team is now well established and is bringing about improvements to children’s services. A good example of this is the embedding of the new multi-agency districts which are jointly commissioning services and providing increasingly effective support for children and young people. This represents a good response from the council to an important recommendation of APA 2007. The council is improving its provision across the range of children’s services though outcomes remain below those in similar councils in a number of areas. Health indicators are generally adequate overall. Similarly, staying safe measures are adequate, for whilst good action has been taken to reduce child road deaths and to improve child protection procedures, the timely reviews of looked after children are not yet good enough. The council’s school improvement service has been restructured in line with the district approach and has received significant recent impetus from the Manchester Challenge. The impact of the council’s work can be seen in the steady improvements to children and young people’s attainment in most phases of schooling. Key Stage 3 results continue to be disappointing. Overall, whilst the trends of children and young people’s attainment are encouraging, the standards reached remain below those in similar councils and nationally. The council is working closely with a range of partners to improve opportunities in the 14–19 curriculum and the development of new secondary schools and academies is progressing well. The percentage of young people aged 16 to 19 not in education, employment or training continues to fall and is now on a par with similar councils. The proportion of young people aged 19 gaining Level 3 qualifications is particularly impressive. The number of young people involved in criminal activity has been successfully reduced but there are still too many repeat offenders. The council has effective monitoring arrangements which ensure it has an accurate and up to date knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of its services.

Being healthy

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- Although still lower than the levels found nationally and in similar councils there has been impressive improvement from a low baseline in the percentage of schools achieving Healthy School status.
- Good action has been taken to promote breast-feeding with an overall increase in breast-feeding initiation rates. Infant mortality rates have steadily reduced and are now lower than similar councils.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite a reduction in teenage conceptions over the past year, overall teenage conception rates remain high. |
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Staying safe

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, indicates early signs of improvement in important weaknesses that need to be sustained, and overvalues the areas where progress has been made. There has been investment of resources to increase capacity and improve performance in many of the staying safe performance indicators. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite a significant increase in numbers of children who are the subject of child protection plans, a high percentage of these have been reviewed within the statutory timescales and all have been allocated to social workers. ▪ A comparatively low number of children whose child protection plans have ceased have become the subject of repeated child protection plans. Similarly, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of core assessments completed and a high percentage of these have been completed within the statutory timescales with better performance than similar councils or nationally. ▪ There has been good progress in reducing child deaths or injuries from road traffic accidents in the latest year for which there are data and this is now much in line with the national picture. |
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Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ While numbers of looked after children have reduced they are still significantly high in comparison to similar councils. ▪ Only 77% of looked after children had their reviews within the agreed timescales. This compares unfavourably with similar councils. ▪ The number of initial assessments completed within the statutory timescales has decreased and is lower than similar councils. |
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Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. This is in line with the council's self-assessment. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence. Although the council has identified many of its strengths and areas for development and the overall trend is one of gradual

improvement, there is much still to do to improve outcomes. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p>Major strengths</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children and young people are making increasingly good progress in most key stages. Many vulnerable groups achieve well including many minority ethnic groups and looked after children. In many respects their achievements are closing the gap with their peers. ▪ Significant improvements have been achieved in the outcomes for children at age five. Inspections of the council's provision for Early Years Foundation Stage show that the most are judged as good. ▪ The year on year improvement in the number of young people in Key Stage 4 achieving five A* to C GCSE grades is faster than that of similar councils and the national trend. ▪ Good systems for monitoring the attainment of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are ensuring outcomes are improving at a faster rate than nationally. Special educational needs assessment is timely and effective. Increasingly these children and young people are placed in mainstream provision, and specialist support for these is appropriately funded. The number of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities educated outside the council areas has reduced considerably. ▪ The attendance and punctuality of looked after children who attend the council's children's homes are much improved and are above similar councils and nationally. Overall, the percentage of looked after children achieving five A* to C GCSE grades or A* to C GNVQ is now in line with national averages and close to that of similar councils. This represents a significant improvement.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At Key Stage 2, while improvement in achievement is faster than nationally overall, attainment in a significant number of the council's primary schools remain below floor targets. In Key Stage 3 children and young people make less than average progress and standards are static. Over half the secondary schools in the council have results in Key Stage 3 below floor targets in one or more subjects. ▪ Exclusions in primary and secondary schools are well above that of similar councils and nationally. The percentage of children and young people with statements of special educational needs who are excluded from mainstream schools is increasing and is well above similar councils and nationally. ▪ The educational attainment of boys in reading and writing especially in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is well below average and significantly poorer than the attainment of girls. ▪ Despite sustained improvements in recent years the rate of attendance for children and young people is well below average in primary and secondary schools.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 2

Similarly, 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 indicates early signs of improvement in important weaknesses that need to be sustained, and overvalues 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"> ▪ Steady progress has been made in reducing the numbers of young people who commit criminal offences for the first time. ▪ There are a good range of opportunities and training for young people to have a say in service development including youth volunteering with resulting changes to service design.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The percentage of young people who commit offences and who are engaged in education, employment or training remains low in comparison with similar councils or nationally. ▪ The numbers of young people reached by the youth service remain significantly below national targets.

Achieving economic well-being

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 numbers of young people aged 16–18 and 19 who are not in education, employment or training is declining year on year and is now in line with similar councils. ▪ The council has a good 14–19 strategy which is working well with local partners. The curriculum is good and improving including opportunities for work based learning. ▪ The percentage of students achieving Level 3 qualifications is above similar councils. This is impressive.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The completion rate for children and young people involved in work based learning or an NVQ qualification is below the national rate.

Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services

Grade 2

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is adequate. The senior leadership team is now well established and provides more effective direction for the council's services. The capacity of the team is evidenced by the confidence shown in them by wider partners, including the Manchester Challenge initiative, and this is raising expectations. Despite no change in outcome grades this year tangible improvements are beginning to emerge. The relatively new districts, established to sharpen the effectiveness of Children's Services are delivering improvements through joint commissioning, more robust planning and clearer priorities which link across the range of services. Although unit costs remain high, value for money is improving as resources are better matched to the clearly identified needs arising from the council's more effective monitoring arrangements. The trend in performance outcomes is improving in most of the priority indicators but absolute standards remain stubbornly below those found in similar councils in a number of important aspects. The council has acted well on the recommendations of the most recent JAR and the 2007 APA. The Children and Young Peoples' Plan shows appropriate priorities based upon suitable analysis and there is due consideration given to the views of young people and of the local community including relevant partners. Self-assessment is on the whole realistic about improvements made and areas for development, though over-estimating the current quality of service and outcomes achieved in staying safe and positive contribution.

Major strengths

- The senior leadership team is bringing about improvements to the commissioning and delivering of children's services.
- Trends show improvements in the performance of most priority indicators across many outcome areas but from a generally low base.
- Priorities relate closely to marked improvements in data collection, monitoring and analysis. The Performance Improvement Board has very clear priorities linking across children's services.
- Good progress has been made to establish a Children's Trust leadership team. A multi-agency district model is now being fully implemented to strengthen early intervention and prevention. Improved engagement with wider partners including schools, Primary Care Trust and voluntary groups.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

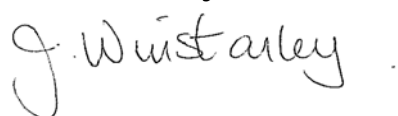
- The large-scale and long-term nature of the Manchester Change Programme means that sustainable improvements in some service outcomes have yet to be fully demonstrated.
- The district model of multi-agency support is at a relatively early stage of development.
- There is much to do to ensure that outcomes for children and young people

accelerate so that the gap to national expectations and the standards achieved by children and young people in similar council areas is realised.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection