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Ms Pauline Newman
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Manchester City Council
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Dear Ms Newman

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan, your action plan arising from the joint area review and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. The letter comments on progress since the recent joint area review. 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.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 2

The effectiveness of children's services is adequate. The council's contribution to improving outcomes, and addressing recommendations from the joint area review, is adequate. There is clear evidence that the provision of services is improving. There are strong strategic partnerships between the council and schools, voluntary organisations, health, children and young people, and parents and carers. A high level of engagement takes place between children's services and external agencies including local and central government. This provides additional strategic capacity and is aiding the pace of improvement. The restructuring of the senior leadership team is now complete and the team is providing a firm steer to the plans to create districts in which services will be managed and delivered. The council's capacity to improve is adequate.

Being healthy

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Three recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For immediate action

- Improve information to parents and carers on what to do if they are unable to register with a local doctor or NHS dentist.
- Ensure the parents of children and young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive coordinated support from agencies.

For action over the longer term

- Reduce the health inequalities in different parts of the city.

The council has made good progress on all three recommendations since the joint area review.

Information is available to parents and carers on how to register with a doctor and a dentist, with flyers in libraries and other public areas. Staff across services have emphasised the importance of registering with a doctor and a dentist and what to do if there is a problem. In the future, on-going monitoring of the quality and accessibility of information will be carried out by the Patient Advice and Liaison Services.

A multi-agency board has been formed to coordinate services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Agencies involved in delivering services are represented on the board. As well as coordinating support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities the board aims to improve early diagnosis. An early diagnosis ensures that the right support is offered as soon as possible. Frontline staff have received training in early recognition supported by Sure Start. Currently many children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported by specialist teams. Referral pathways and protocols are being reviewed to ensure that access to specialist teams is timely and equitable across the city. Overtime the council plans to develop a district based model of support where appropriate.

The Manchester Health Inequalities Action Plan has begun to target actions and to reduce health inequalities. The plan is supported by a strong partnership between the council and local health services. Plans are based on a detailed needs analysis which considers inequalities at the district and ward level. Although it is early for this long term preventative strategy to create demonstrable improved outcomes some

improvements have been achieved. For example, there has been an improvement in rates of mothers choosing to breast-feed in Central and North Manchester. Rates in Central Manchester have risen by 10.8%.

A Teenage Pregnancy Strategy is in place but has not yet reversed the rising number of teenage conceptions, which is now 14.4% above the original 1998 baseline figure. Statistical neighbour authorities have over the same period seen a 6.5% decrease in numbers and in England the overall average decrease has been 12%. The council recognises this to be a priority area and is planning to improve the allocation of resources through better coordination.

Good support and information encouraging healthy lifestyles is available to parents and carers through early years services. However, last year the number of expectant mothers who smoked during pregnancy increased in all areas with numbers in two areas rising above that found in similar areas. Good partnership working between the Primary Care Trust and the council is demonstrated through the Vulnerable Babies Project. This has resulted in a decrease in the infant mortality rate and a decrease in the number of low birth weight babies and performance is now comparable to that in the statistical neighbour authorities. Immunisation rates in Central and North Manchester are below the rates of statistical neighbour authorities. South Manchester, in contrast, has achieved most success with the number in line or above statistical neighbours against a range of indicators.

The council have developed an Obesity Strategy which focuses on prevention, healthy eating and increased engagement in sporting activities. The Tellus2 survey suggests there are good numbers of children and young people engaged in regular physical activity. Schools, particularly primaries, performed well last year, with high numbers rated as good or outstanding in their inspections for the extent to which they enabled learners to be healthy. Currently, 20% of schools have Healthy School Status, a figure 3% above the planned target. It is, however, significantly below the national target of 50% and the regional average of 47%. The number of children with missing or decayed teeth has risen in Central and North Manchester and rates in all areas are now significantly above the England average.

Services promote mental well-being for children and young people well. Good progress has been made in developing a comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Waiting times for mental health assessments have reduced. The numbers of young people receiving treatment for substance misuse has increased. However, due to increasing numbers of people accessing treatment the overall percentage of young people by comparison receiving treatment has fallen.

The health needs of vulnerable children and young people are well supported. For example, young people who offend are supported with timely assessments for mental health or substance misuse problems. Looked after children and young people have their health needs met by a dedicated team of support nurses with high numbers (87%) having their basic health checks undertaken.

Area(s) for development

- Improve oral health.
- Reduce the number of teenage conceptions.
- Reduce the number of pregnant women who smoke during pregnancy.
- Increase the number of schools achieving Healthy School Status.

Staying safe

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Three recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For immediate action

- Reduce further the number of children and young people known to be missing.
- Review the safeguarding arrangements for children with disabilities and ensure they receive an appropriate level of safeguarding.

For action over the longer term

- Reduce the number of looked after children.

The council can demonstrate adequate progress has been made in the three areas identified as areas for improvement by the joint area review.

A Children Missing from Education protocol is in place which covers all vulnerable groups. Schools are now engaged in monitoring and evaluating children who are on the school's register and require tracking. Health services and housing are also engaged in providing information regarding families who move into the area and who are not in connection with other services to ensure children and young people can be allocated school places. Children and young people who are missing from home and care are supported with agency protocols in place.

A multi-agency board is responsible for improving coordination of services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The board has close links with the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board. Referral pathways have been reviewed to ensure that safeguarding support is appropriately provided. Staff have received training in safeguarding. Children and young people with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities now have more local school places available enabling more to remain living at home. As part of a good practice model the council intends to monitor numbers of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are represented in the child protection assessment and safeguarding processes. Current national monitoring of children and young people on the child protection register from Black and minority ethnic groups allows a similar process to take place.

The council is taking action to reduce the number of looked after children and young people. There has been an increase in support to families to prevent children and young people from becoming looked after. The council report that, following a five year trend of rising figures there is some recent success in stabilising the numbers of looked after children and young people. As more children and young people who would have previously been taken into care now remain in their own homes, there has been an increase in the number of children and young people who are subject to child protection plans. At the end of March 2007, the number of children who were subject of a child protection plan was low in comparison to statistical neighbour authorities.

The Manchester Safeguarding Children Board is providing good leadership on a wide safeguarding agenda which includes reducing accidents, reducing incidents of domestic violence, tackling gun and gang issues, linking children's well-being with adult mental health and drug misuse issues, and reducing the risk of child sexual exploitation. The board has developed a set of standards for conducting serious case reviews and learning from reviews is reflected in the training programme. Work to promote good practice with partner agencies is demonstrated in the monitoring and support of the local Primary Care Trust which, following a self-evaluation, suggested there was a lack of confidence expressed by some providers in delivering consistently on national child protection standards. As a result, issues identified in the self-assessment have been the subject of further work.

Currently, higher numbers of children and young people are referred to the council. A review of service has identified that this is due to recording practices at the council call centre where all contacts, for whatever reason, had been recorded as referrals. The number of referrals that result in initial or core assessments is low in comparison to those in statistical neighbour authorities. However, assessments undertaken are completed in a timely manner with more initial and core assessments being completed within timescales than in statistical neighbour authorities. For child protection inquiries that conclude in a case conference, the number of conferences undertaken within timescales is lower than that in statistical neighbour authorities. However, children subject to a child protection plan or looked after have an allocated social worker and cases of children on the child protection register are reviewed on time.

Looked after children and young people live in stable placements. The council is working to improve the quality of planning for individual children and young people in care alongside a strategy for improving the quality of placements, both in

residential homes and in foster care. The number of looked after children reviews that took place within timescales was significantly below that of statistical neighbours at 64%. This is unacceptably poor. The council report some improvements so far this year with plans to improve further.

Good support is available for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and over 90% of them have a transition plan in place at the age of 14. However, the number of care leavers who have a pathway plan in place is lower than the number in statistical neighbour authorities.

Area(s) for development

- Improve referral recording.
- Reduce the time taken for child protection enquiries to reach case conferences.
- Work with all partners to improve compliance with child protection standards.
- Ensure that reviews of plans for looked after children and young people are completed on time.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Four recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For immediate action

- Reduce the time taken to find children and young people a suitable school place when they transfer during the year or move into the city.
- Raise the attainment levels of looked after children by:
 - ensuring they all receive health assessments
 - ensuring they all have a good quality, up-to-date personal education plan
 - ensuring the Children's Rights Service is able to meet the needs of looked after children who require advocacy, advice and guidance.

For action in the next six months

- Ensure children and young people excluded from school are placed speedily in other schools or alternative provision.

For action in the longer term

- Improve attainment at all ages and particularly at age 14 (Key Stage 3).

The council can demonstrate that adequate progress has been made in the four areas identified as areas for improvement by the joint area review.

A coordinated school admission system is ensuring greater cohesion between the differing types of schools and adheres to the code of practice on admissions. There is appropriate liaison with neighbouring local authorities. This results in more children and young people being allocated to schools quickly. Children and young people in danger of exclusion are benefiting from a new 'hard-to-place' protocol which provides early intervention by communicating with parents and carers and involving a wide range of external agencies. The authority has in place a quality assurance system to monitor any alternative educational provision which is made for excluded children and young people. Nevertheless, the number of children and young people excluded from school especially for a fixed term, in primary and secondary schools is high. Fixed-term exclusions in relation to the number of pupils in primary schools, rose from 1.37% in 2004 to 1.59% in 2005. This is above the figure for statistical neighbour authorities. In secondary schools fixed-term exclusions were 19.06% in 2006 compared to 12.79% in similar councils.

Personal Education Plans are in place for the majority of looked after children and young people with a planned increased focus on their quality. There has been an increase in the staffing levels for the Children's Rights Service and this is providing better access to the service.

Many strategies are in place to raise the attainment of children and young people in all phases of education. The 'birth to 11 project' aims to ensure there is suitable emphasis on the transition points between phases of education such as at ages 5, 7 and 11. In the Foundation Stage there is a strong focus on improving children's communication, language and literacy skills and also their personal and social development. In Key Stage 3 where standards are very low the local authority has reviewed the school improvement cycle with schools. As a result, the role of school improvement partners is sharpened and in secondary schools each is external of the local authority. The secondary national strategy provides effective support to schools. There is an integrated support plan for school improvement which is a systematic approach to raising standards. The school inspection service has been restructured and refocused. Indications from the local authorities data for tests in 2007 show a mixed set of results and it is too early to measure the impact of the strategies on the standards reached by children and young people.

Whilst educational attainment remains poor overall compared to national figures it is improving and the progress of children and young people is good in many areas. For example, the percentage of young people achieving five A* to C grades rose from 40.75% in 2004 to 48.98% in 2006. This remains below the figures found nationally and in statistical neighbours in 2006 but the gap is narrowing. Young people studying A and AS levels achieve well. Many strategies to improve children and

young people's attainment levels are at an early stage of development. School inspection evidence demonstrates strong provision in many primary schools and at least satisfactory provision in most secondary schools. Young people are well served in post 16 provisions. The number of schools causing concern is reducing and a new protocol is in place following extensive consultation and trialling with schools. No new schools are causing concern in 2006/7 whilst two schools and one pupil referral unit have improved sufficiently to no longer require significant improvement. Children and young people's attendance is improving in primary and secondary schools due to the successful strategies which target individual schools.

Area(s) for development

- Increase the level of children and young people's attainment.
- Reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions in primary and secondary schools.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate with some areas of good practice. Two recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For action in the next six months

- Improve the quality of services for young carers.
- Ensure children and young people are able to influence decisions and changes to policy and services at a strategic level.

Good progress has been made in these areas following the joint area review. The council have put in place a young carers steering group, which is attended by senior council officers. The group's role is to raise awareness of the needs of young carers and ensure that services are developed to meet those needs. There is an increase in the number of services available to support young carers and an increased emphasis on carrying out young carers' assessments. Work continues to identify children and young people who despite being young carers do not automatically come to the attention of services.

The council has embraced the need to place children and young people in positions where they can influence decisions and policy at a strategic level. An engagement board has been established to provide a strategic overview. The board also considers how positive images can be promoted for children and young people from minority ethnic groups. Children and young people are now engaged in council overview and scrutiny committees. This ensures they can influence the development of council policy. All service developments and workforce plans now consider how children and young people will be engaged as part of developments. To ensure that engagement

is effective the council has introduced the Inclusion Standards, which cover engagement from consultation to feedback on the impact of involvement. The council is also piloting using Hear by Right standards to assess current performance and improve future engagement.

Engagement at a local district level is supported by the development of parent and carer groups and forums alongside children and young people's forums. Engagement in school is improving and is now undertaken in line with the Inclusion Standards. Feedback from children and young people suggests they feel able to become involved and influence decisions taken. The council has developed partnerships with voluntary organisations and is effectively engaging more of the traditionally harder to reach through these partnerships.

There has been an investment in the council youth service with an 8.13% increase in funding this year. Spending in this area is now almost in line with that of statistical neighbour authorities. Whilst the number of young people directly contacted has increased this year it is still significantly below levels reached in previous years. The council plans to improve coordination and integration of youth services provided both directly by the council and by other agencies and voluntary groups. Bullying is being positively tackled and work has already been undertaken to reduce the incidence of homophobic bullying.

There is a strong focus on reducing anti-social behaviour. The youth offending team has played a significant role. The number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system has reduced. Innovative solutions include one project that is reducing anti-social behaviour by engaging young people through music. The number of young people who re-offend remains higher than found in statistical neighbour authorities. The figure for 2003 (most recently available) is 65.8% compared to the statistical neighbour figure of 56.8% and a national figure of 49.7%.

Looked after children and young people have benefited from increased access to children's rights officers and independent visitors. This has increased their ability to become engaged in consultations. The number of children and young people looked after who contributed to their review and therefore their plan for care was excellent. However, many of these reviews did not take place on time.

Area(s) for development

- Reduce the re-offending rate.
- Ensure that the youth service reaches more young people.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For action in the next six months

- Implement a learning entitlement for all 14–19 year olds.

Good progress has been made in this area following the joint area review. There is collaborative and well-structured 14–19 partnership working, a coherent strategy and a good implementation plan. Opportunities are available for young people to access a broad range of 14–19 provision at Levels 1–3 across the city. There is good collaboration between schools, colleges and training providers so that options and pathways for young people are good. Inspection of colleges shows a significant amount of outstanding provision. There is an online prospectus which provides a good search tool for the full range of courses and qualifications available.

The percentage of young people not engaged in education, employment or training is reducing ahead of the council's targets. The figures for 16–18 year olds not in education, employment or training compare favourably with statistical neighbour authorities. Overall the figures are a significant improvement and progress is good. Young people often have low levels of basic skills at age 16 and the local Connexions partnership and the Learning and Skills Council are working hard to improve this. Further Education Colleges are putting bridging provision in place. The percentage of young people achieving Level 2 or Level 3 by 19 years is higher than statistical neighbours and improving at a faster rate than found in statistical neighbour authorities. Work-based placements are available to all Key Stage 4 children and young people in schools and participation rates are adequate and improving. Substantial progress is being made towards a collaborative model for the development of City Academies. These are to be commissioned in the six new districts and the quality of work experience for young people is planned to be broad and closely matched to local needs and growth sectors of the community.

The 14–19 provision for vulnerable groups of young people is improving. Looked after children and young people have a designated person assigned in each of the post 16 providers and they give effective guidance and liaise with schools and children's services. The percentage of looked after young people in education, employment or training at 19 years is improving. The tracking of their attainment is improving due to positive developments in data systems. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and their participation in learning at age 16 is increasing. The monitoring of the educational performance of Black and minority ethnic young people is less strong than for other groups.

Area(s) for development

- Strengthen the impact of 14–19 provision for vulnerable groups.
- Carefully monitor the educational performance of Black and minority ethnic groups.

Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is adequate, and its management of these services is adequate. Four recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For action in the longer term

- Finalise arrangements for the joint commissioning of services for children and young people.
- Ensure services assess value for money routinely, particularly with reference to special educational needs and budget surpluses in schools.
- Coordinate the collection of performance information by all services and use it in the monitoring of those services.
- Ensure the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) contains an appropriate budget strategy, including a three-year forecast.

The council can demonstrate that at least adequate progress has been made in the four areas identified as areas for improvement by the joint area review.

Arrangements for the joint commissioning of services for children and young people are at an early stage with an emphasis on local commissioning developing through a district model. Senior officers have developed a process for undertaking value for money reviews of services. Performance information is used in the monitoring of separate services and the council plans to integrate this into its district model. The CYPP contains a one year budget plan and its three year forecast is illustrated in the wider business plan.

The council has completed a significant restructuring of the senior leadership team. There is now a settled management team who are energised and fully committed to the seven priorities of the CYPP. The council has embraced the support and added capacity of the Performance Improvement Board established in partnership with local and central government offices. Partnership working is strengthening through a strong drive to develop multi-agency teams in the district model. District panels are acting as forerunners for the District Boards which are intended to provide leadership in the commissioning and delivery of services. While this is still at an early stage the strategy and planning for greater autonomy is well advanced. The pooling of resources is not yet in place.

After much restructuring and re-organisation, senior officers have met with groups of headteachers to consult on a number of areas including the support for schools causing concern and the role of School Improvement Partners. A review of surplus places in primary schools has recommended a variety of strategies including proposals to close some schools and to reduce the admission numbers of others. The

council has successfully reduced the number of schools with surplus places to around 10% which is lower than statistical neighbour authorities and the national figure.

Re-prioritising of council budgets has taken place across education and social care. Procurement savings have been made through the renegotiation of contracts. Budget monitoring has a good range of structures. The children's services budget is linked to the council's business plan; this has clearly identified priorities funded through reinvested savings which promote early interventions and prevention in services.

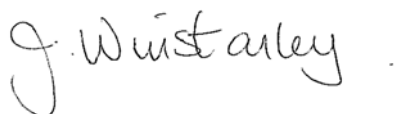
Area(s) for development

- Ensure plans for district services clearly identify specific targets for improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Ensure resources are successfully pooled to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Overall the council has demonstrated adequate progress in meeting the joint area review recommendations. The more stable senior management team has the capacity to improve further the services for children and young people.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection