

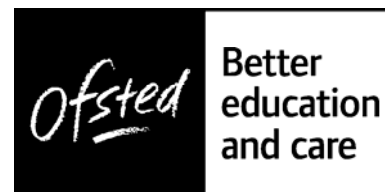
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Making Social Care
Better for People



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1 December 2005

Dear Mr Dessent

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 20 July 2005 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

Outcomes in this area are good. There is consistent and improving performance for the health of looked after children and 78% of schools participate in the healthy schools scheme. The council is served by a multi-agency service for drugs and alcohol with expansion planned in the coming year. Permanent exclusions relating to drugs and alcohol remain low. Teenage pregnancies have been effectively reduced with an overall reduction of 8.6% compared to 1998 baseline. Changes to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have resulted in a low level of social work support. This has been a conscious decision with its strategic partners to focus its resources in relation to CAMH provision on tier 1 mental health service and the learning disability services. The staffing requirements are currently being reviewed. The council has developed several local initiatives to promote child health for Black and minority ethnic groups in Luton.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are good. Concerns, identified in the last year's annual performance review, remain about the number of initial and core assessments completed within the timescales and the allotment of children on the child protection register. The review also recommended that the council should develop effective

strategies to reduce the high rate of looked after children; this continues to be an ongoing issue.

Performance has improved over a number of Performance Indicators and is in the top banding for the following:

- Stability of placements of children looked after
- Re-registrations of children on the Child Protection Register
- Employment, education and training for the care leavers
- Children looked after in foster placements or placed for adoption
- Health of children looked after
- Reviews of child protection cases now at 100%
- Duration on the Child Protection Register
- Ethnicity of children in need.

The high numbers of looked after children have a significant impact on placement choice and resources. Strategies are being developed to tackle this and it remains a multi-agency priority.

The council faces workforce issues in relation to recruitment to social workers' and managers' posts. Vacancies currently stand at 25% and there are various initiatives to try and address this. The staffing situation has had an effect on timescales for initial and core assessments which are well below the England average and are the lowest in their comparator group. Short-term stability, fostering and adoptions of under 10 year-olds continue to improve with good to excellent performance. It is expected that Luton will reach the LPSA target for adoptions in 2005/6.

Services to black and ethnic minority children and families are improving. Progress has been made in analysing the needs, which have led to an increase in foster carers from the various communities within Luton. The council recognises the importance of continuing to focus attention on this area.

The number of direct payments for carers of disabled children is low and is below those in similar areas and England averages. The council are examining ways to increase take-up through joint work with staff in the adult social care teams.

Partnership working is developing well with the Local Safeguarding Children Board becoming operative from October 2005. An enhanced budget has been agreed and there will be a major review of existing protocols and procedures. Outcomes for children need to be reviewed in the light of these developments. The Area Child Protection Committee has continued to meet in the interim period.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory.

There has been a rapid expansion of the early years provision. The quality of childminders, full day care is in line with the national average. One of the ten sessional care settings inspected was judged to be unsatisfactory. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 are below the national average but are in line for statistical neighbours in writing and mathematics. They are above statistical neighbours and in line with national average for reading. Standards at Key Stage 2 are below averages nationally and are in line with statistical neighbours in English and science. Standards are well below statistical neighbours in mathematics where a decline over the last two years to the floor target places the authority fifth worst in the country at this level.

Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved in line with the national trends but are below national averages and in line with statistical neighbours in mathematics and science. They are below statistical neighbours and well below the national average in Key Stage 3 English and in average points score. At Key Stage 4 pupils perform above the national average and statistical neighbours for 1 A*-G in GCSEs but below national averages and statistical neighbours for 5 A*-C in GCSEs. A two percentage point increase in 5 or more A*-C grades in the last year was concentrated in only four schools. There are significant gender differences in performance at every key stage. At Key Stage 4 girls outperformed boys by 9.9% in 2004. Pupils from black African or Caribbean heritage do not perform as well as other pupils. The authority is aware of this and is focussing efforts to improve the performance of these groups.

Progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 is below the median but is good from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. There is wide variation of the performance of different schools within the authority with some schools making significant improvement in their results and others which have declining standards. The proportion of looked after children leaving care gaining 1 or more passes at GCSE is good but is well below average for 5 or more A*-C at GCSE. However, small numbers in this group can distort these statistics.

Attendance has improved and is now in line with statistical neighbours for secondary and primary schools. Permanent exclusions at both primary and secondary schools are lower than national averages and statistical neighbours and as a result lower numbers than the national average attend alternative tuition. The proportion of supervised juveniles in full-time education, training and employment is above the national average.

Support for schools placed in a formal category of concern by Ofsted is effective with five of the six schools which were in categories in December 2003, being removed by December 2004. However, the authority has a larger number of schools in special

measures than the national median and statistical neighbours. A further two schools went into special measures in 2003/04. The authority has had a system of monitoring schools but they have not been effective in identifying schools at risk of going into a category of concern. The authority has plans to introduce new procedures to monitor the progress of all schools from September 2005.

The authority has employed very effective inclusion policies which have resulted in tangible outcomes. There has been a significant increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs educated in mainstream schools. The Luton 'flying start' pilot in which family workers support primary schools has resulted in considerable improvements in results at Key Stage 1 in the school that has been involved in the pilot.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. The council actively promotes opportunities for children and young people to make a positive contribution to their local communities. The majority of schools have school councils. There is a youth parliament with a broad range of groups represented. A number of initiatives enable young people to be involved in decision-making, such as the Luton Crew and the Luton Youth Together for Everyone Cabinet Group. The children's panel, which is a council committee made up of looked after children and the care leavers, enables them to have their views represented.

The youth offending team (YOT) has made significant improvements in the last year. There has been a decrease in the number of young people receiving a custodial sentence and an increase in the use of restorative justice. The percentage of young people supervised by the YOT who are in full-time education, training or employment has increased significantly to 79%

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are unsatisfactory. The strategy and provision for the 14-19 education were judged very weak in the area inspection in March 2004. Collaborative partnerships have been established. The local Learning and Skills Council and LEA are now developing a closer working relationship and resources are being allocated to tackle underperformance in the 14-19 phase. An 11-19 achievement group has been established and schools and colleges are starting to work together more closely. A 14-19 director has been working part-time in the last few months and takes up full-time post in September 2005. Progress has been made but the average point score of students entered for GCE/VCE/AS and the achievement rates for 5 A8-C at GCSE are well below national averages and that of statistical neighbours. Improvements in the configuration of 14-19 provision will be implemented in September 2005.

The percentage of young people not in education, employment or training has improved to 7% in the last year which is just above the national average. The Connexions service has changed its delivery model to one which is more localised and has forged closer partnerships with the YOT team. An analysis of the groups of young people likely to drop out of education and training has been completed and reviews carried out of the types of activities that might interest and engage them. The rate of young people staying on in full-time education has also increased to just below the national average. The number of care leavers in employment, education and training at 19 is high at 70%.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistent and improving performance for health of looked after children • improvements to recruitment practices for foster carers in relation to promoting children's health. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good fostering and adoption services • young people with disabilities have their views reflected in key decisions in the Borough • good short term stability of placements • good performance on child protection reviews now at 100%. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the continuing high numbers of looked after children • continue to ensure children on CPR are allocated to a qualified social worker • performance on initial and core assessments • low numbers of direct payments for carers of disabled children.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good inclusion policies which have led to tangible outcomes such as low exclusions • improvements in attendance in secondary schools • good achievement for pupils (including looked after children) at 1 A*-G in GCSEs. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • below national average standards at all key stages • under-achievement of boys • higher than national average number of schools in special measures • great variation in the performance between secondary schools.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outcomes for young offenders • good contributions by young people in decision-making and supporting the community • good representation of looked after children and those leaving care through the children’s panel. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low numbers of children with statement having a transition plan.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvement in NEET figures from a very low base to just above the national average • improvements in staying on rates in education to just below the national average • improvements in collaboration between key partners since the area inspection in 2004 • very good levels of care leavers in employment, education and training at the age of 19. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategy and provision for 14-19 education • outcomes for post-16.

Service management

The council has collaborated closely with relevant partners in analysing needs and setting targets which are extremely ambitious. There has been good analysis of the data but the council has not identified clear strategies to act on all the known weaknesses. The priorities for outcomes for children have not yet been appropriately integrated into the plans of the two merging services.

Progress is being made to produce a single children and young people’s plan. Current plans focus on processes rather than outcomes and this makes it difficult to assess impact. However, the analysis of data confirms an improving trajectory in a number of areas which indicates a track record on which the relatively new integrated department can build further developments

Although the self-assessment could have clarified in more detail the weaknesses and subsequent actions there is evidence that Luton has some clear priorities, which have been a result of effective strategic planning.

The council has good capacity to improve further.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review:

Being healthy

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

- local strategies to support children and young people's mental health
- the impact of health policies on different ethnic groups.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- initial assessment of child protection issues.

Enjoying and achieving

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

- the school improvement service and the quality of education provision.

Achieving economic well-being

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

- the implementation and impact of the 14-19 post-inspection action plan.

Final judgements

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

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Luton 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	3
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

1

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