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17 December 2008

Mr Peter Duxbury
Director of Children's Services
County Offices
Lincolnshire County Council
Newland
Lincoln
LN1 1YQ

Dear Mr Duxbury

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Lincolnshire County 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	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	4
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	4
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	4

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

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

Lincolnshire County Council provides services for children and young people that are consistently above the minimum requirements. The council delivers good performance in most areas of its work and outstanding performance in staying safe and economic well-being. The council has taken prompt action to tackle the recommendations made in the 2007 joint area review (JAR) and APA and has made good progress in most of these areas. Children and young people's services have outstanding capacity to improve further and the management of services is also outstanding. The council has improved its work with partners to promote healthy lifestyles and outcomes are now good. Safeguarding procedures appear to be very well-established across all services and the proportion of children and young people who are subject to child protection plans or looked after has reduced because of the very effective implementation of the common assessment framework. Young people, including those from vulnerable groups, achieve very well by the end of Key Stage 4. However, the progress made in primary schools is slower and too many schools are in the lowest quartile nationally. The council has ensured that children and young people have good access to decision making and a large majority report that their views have been taken into account in schools. Action to ensure economic well-being is outstanding. The attainment of young people is above that nationally and in similar councils and the proportion not in employment, education or training (NEET) is falling consistently.

Being healthy

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.

Major strengths

- The rate of mothers initiating breast-feeding has increased and is now above the national average as a result of effective multi-agency involvement and targeted services.
- By providing integrated services through children's centres and further targeted support, there has been improvement in health promotion. As a result, the health of vulnerable children and young people has improved as demonstrated by increased cessation of smoking amongst teenage mothers.
- Effective partnerships and locally-based services have enabled very good progress in providing an integrated child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) which meets or exceeds its targets for learning disabilities, mental health services appropriate to age, and 24-hour access to services for urgent need.

<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Performance on completing annual health checks for looked after children and young people has decreased and is now below the national average. The combined figure for health and dental checks has also decreased slightly, and is just below the national average. ▪ The recent planning and investment to reconfigure school nursing and health visiting has yet to enable the access to, and improvement of, healthy lifestyles for all children and young people. All schools are yet to be involved in the Healthy Schools Programme. |
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Staying safe

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Local Safeguarding Children Board is very effective and provides strong leadership. ▪ Referrals and assessments, supported by very efficient use of the common assessment framework, are effective and timely and performance exceeds that found nationally and in similar councils. The numbers of children and young people subject to child protection plans has steadily decreased over the last four years and is well below the national average. ▪ Services for looked after children are very good. The most recent inspection of the council's foster care services judged them to be outstanding. The stability of placements is very good and adoption rates are above average. All looked after children have a named, qualified social worker. |
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<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p>
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Enjoying and achieving

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 in this outcome area overvalues the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths

- The standards achieved by young people at the end of Key Stage 4 are outstanding. They are consistently above those of similar councils and the national average and have improved at a faster rate than both. The progress made by young people in secondary schools is well above that achieved nationally.
- The majority of provision, as judged in inspections, is good, especially childcare, secondary and special schools where the proportions that are good or better are above the national average. The council has twice the proportion of secondary schools judged to be outstanding in comparison to the national profile.
- The council takes prompt and effective action to improve schools, including the use of federations, interim and executive head teachers. No secondary or special school or pupil referral unit has been placed in a category of concern for several years. The rate of primary schools being removed from a category of concern is better than those in similar councils and nationally.
- Effective support and innovative provision enables the performance of young people who are looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to improve and to match or exceed that in similar councils and nationally. Young people with English as an additional language achieve well at Key Stage 4 in comparison to those nationally and to their peers.
- Attendance rates are above those nationally and in line with those in similar councils. The council has taken effective action to improve attendance in targeted schools.
- Fixed term exclusions in secondary schools are lower than those in similar councils and nationally. Permanent exclusions in secondary schools have fallen consistently and are now below the national average. The council's data shows a marked improvement in the provision of at least 20 hours of education to young people who are excluded from school and this is now above the national average.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The rate of decline in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 is faster than that nationally and in similar councils. Although performance at Key Stage 2 improved in 2007, the trend of improvement in English and science was slower than that nationally.
- Too many primary schools, excluding those who have too few pupils for their results to be published, are in the lowest quartile nationally for the progress made by children from Year 2 to Year 6.
- The rate of permanent exclusions in primary schools, although reduced over the last three years as a result of effective strategies implemented by the council, is above that nationally. Permanent exclusions in special schools have also fallen steadily but remain above the national average.

Making a positive contribution

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 council successfully promotes the involvement of children and young people in consultation and decision making. The Youth Cabinet has been active in informing councillors on priorities. A high proportion of children and young people say that they have given their views to school councils and had them heard. ▪ Well-targeted action by the council and its partners, especially the youth offending team, has reduced the numbers of young people coming into the youth justice system and those re-offending, including those who are looked after. These rates are below those in similar areas and nationally. ▪ All children and young people who are looked after gave their views in their statutory reviews. This is above the national average and the council is the only one in its comparative group to achieve a 100% return.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite an increase in the number of youth workers to above the national average, the proportion of children and young people reached by the youth service fell slightly and is now below the national level.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. 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"> ▪ Attainment of 16- to 19-year-olds is outstanding. The percentages of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by age 19 are rising and above the national averages and similar councils. The performance of students in schools with sixth forms in all examinations improved again in 2007 and has been above the average nationally and for similar councils for several years. ▪ Very effective partnership working has enabled the development of a broad and flexible 14–19 curriculum, with wide-ranging opportunity for vocational courses and new diploma qualifications. ▪ Participation in employment, education and training (EET) by young people is improving as a result of very effective advice and guidance. The proportion of young people aged 16 to 19 who are NEET has fallen over the last three years

and is lower than that in similar councils and nationally. A higher proportion of young people who are looked after and teenage mothers are engaged in EET than nationally and in similar councils.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

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

Grade 4

The council’s capacity to improve its services for children and young people is outstanding and its management of these services is outstanding. The council and its partners have a very clear vision for improving the services and outcomes for children and young people. Leadership by the director of children’s services, lead member and senior officers is strong and committed. The Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) is ambitious and firmly based on realistic and challenging priorities which seek to improve outcomes for all and to reduce inequalities. Children, young people and their families are increasingly engaged in consultation and decision making; there are clear examples of their views shaping approaches to services. Very good progress has been made on the establishment of joint commissioning of services and delivery through integrated local multi-professional teams. There has been extremely effective review of some services, for example school transport and resources have consequently been promptly redirected to other priorities. The council’s workforce strategy has substantially reduced the proportion of vacant posts for teachers and social workers. Effective action has led to progress on the areas for action from the 2007 JAR and APA. The majority of the performance indicators for the council’s services show improving trends and compare well with national performance and that of similar councils. Systems for performance management are regular and robust. However, the progress made in too many primary schools is in the lowest quartile nationally.

Major strengths

- Leadership of the council and partnership is active and strong.
- Ambitions and priorities are based on a thorough and comprehensive analysis of need.
- There is strong understanding on behalf of all partners of the vision for children’s services and proven commitment to joint working and commissioning which is delivering increasingly effective, integrated local provision.
- The council and its partners successfully take the views of children, young people and their families into account.
- Systems for review of services, reallocation of funding to priorities and performance management are very effective.
- A clear focus on improving outcomes and reducing inequalities has resulted in improvement in a majority of performance indicators over the last year.

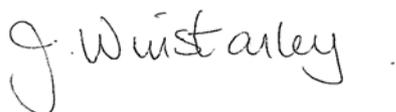
Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Although the council has used innovative responses such as federations, interim and executive head teachers effectively to resolve difficulties in providing leadership in primary schools, achievement in the primary phase generally remains weaker than that in secondary schools. |
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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 blue ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection