

26 November 2007

Mr Peter Duxbury  
Director of Children's Services  
Lincolnshire County Council  
Council Offices  
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Dear Mr Duxbury

## **2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY 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 (CYPP), your action plan arising from the joint area review (JAR) and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. 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 3**

The authority delivers good services which contribute well to improving outcomes for children and young people in Lincolnshire. It has rapidly, and successfully, addressed almost all of the recommendations made in the JAR, particularly in relation to safeguarding. The authority's strong vision of unified services, single purpose and effective partnerships is moving forward impressively. Significant changes in the structure of management and operational teams have been implemented successfully and the individual aspects of the *Every child matters* agenda are well led. Performance management is robust. Children and young people are increasingly influential in determining plans and engaging in activities within the partnership. Services achieve outcomes which are at least in line with, and mostly above, those nationally and in similar authorities.

### **Being healthy**

**Grade 2**

#### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

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

## For action in the next six months

- Health partners should ensure that historical differences in provision across the county are tackled systematically to improve equality of access to health services for all children, young people and families.
- Improve health promotion services and ill health prevention both in schools and in the community, particularly in the east of the county, and improve access to NHS dental services for children and young people.
- Improve services and transition arrangements for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those with complex needs, and ensure they are effectively coordinated to better meet their physical and mental health needs.

The authority has a strong partnership with the health service and shows effective leadership in promoting the health of children and young people through the Children's Trust arrangements. The reduction from three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to one has been disruptive, but the new PCT has already demonstrated a very positive engagement with children's services. There is convincing evidence of improved joint working, service delivery and outcomes for children since the JAR. Much of this is comparatively new but with strong signs of improvement.

The authority, and its partners, have responded promptly to each of the JAR recommendations. The partnership has a systematic understanding of varying needs and inconsistent distribution of services within the county. It is reviewing the way resources are distributed to minimise, or eliminate, inequalities and to boost early intervention to support families.

GP practices provide good child health surveillance and all health providers achieved their targets for key health indicators. Successful recruitment of dentists is beginning to improve access. Formal consultations are advanced on plans to merge the health visiting and school nursing services, which will integrate within local children's partnerships. The provision of school nursing is being reviewed and some vacant school nursing posts have been filled, focusing initially on areas with poorer health outcomes. Inspections have concluded that all schools are adequate, or better, in terms of promoting health and the authority broadly achieved its targets for the number of schools engaged in the Healthy Schools Programme, one of only three in the region to do so. There is good advice for parents in children's centres and Sure Start areas.

Services for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are improving and parents are more involved in service planning. A jointly funded manager is developing a new transitions service for young people from 13–18, if necessary continuing to 25. There is a multi-agency Executive Board, which includes parents, along with a shadow Children and Young People's Board. An audit has established that a significant proportion of young people with the most complex needs are placed out-of-county and a service review is evaluating sustainable local alternatives.

There is a pooled budget for specialist placements with effective protocols for allocation. The provision of respite care has been expanded, with an emphasis on reducing travelling times, and is now adequate. Waiting for occupational therapy assessments has been reduced substantially to five days, which is good. The new protocol for supporting parents immediately after diagnosis of disability will significantly speed up the process and help parents more effectively through this difficult period.

The integrated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) achieved the targets set by the Healthcare Commission and the overall evaluation of the authority's progress on implementation of the improved CAMHS framework has been excellent, in line with similar authorities. The integration of the service is almost complete, with a new manager in post and local authority staff transferred in October 2007. Waiting times for assessment have been significantly reduced and are now within the national average. Specialist teams for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are being launched in October 2007. There is good support to the Youth Offending Service and looked after children. The service is a national pilot for CAMHS workforce reform.

There has been a steady rate of decline of almost one-third in teenage pregnancies from 1998 to 2005, which is significantly better than for similar areas and the national average at around one in eight. Integrated working with multi-agency teams focusing on risky behaviour is one of the effective strategies for responding to hotspots. The Substance Misuse Strategy is positive and the Drug and Alcohol Action Team is reducing the incidence of substance misuse through, for instance, dedicated substance misuse workers in Youth Offending Service.

Support to enable looked after children and young people to be healthy is good, with a large proportion receiving regular health checks on time and priority access to mental health and dental services.

### **Areas for development**

- Ensure health promotion is a consistent element of family support services in all areas.
- Complete the reorganisation of services and transition arrangements for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### **Staying safe**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of the authority's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect has improved since the JAR and is now good. Seven recommendations emerged from the JAR.

### **For immediate action**

- Apply the national guidance appropriately with regard to named nurses for safeguarding within Lincolnshire hospitals.
- Review existing organisational structures to identify and address capacity issues within the Family Support and Family Support Provider Teams. Identify risk and contingency plans to ensure risk assessments are completed in a timely manner and appropriate support put in place when needed.
- Ensure that all children identified as living in private foster placements are allocated to key workers.
- Develop and implement an appropriate training programme for all elected members which enables them to meet their responsibilities in relation to the delivery of the children's agenda and corporate parenting.
- Implement an effective system to ensure all cases are closed appropriately by agreed timescales and ensure sufficient administrative capacity to support this system.

### **For action over the next six months**

- Develop and implement clear thresholds for access to children's social care services that are clearly understood by all partner agencies.
- Develop systems to ensure effective coordination between health services and education to enable all children to be identified and their whereabouts known.

The authority has taken prompt and successful action on all the recommendations from the JAR. Services are now good and outcomes have improved to at least the national average and often beyond. Children and young people generally see themselves as safe within Lincolnshire. The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board is well established, with a representative membership and a good range of procedures, protocols and guidance. The Child Death Overview Panel has reviewed four deaths and recommended improvements in service provision. There is clear evidence of service improvements as a result of recent serious case reviews.

The authority, and partners, have implemented an ambitious and effective programme to change the balance and culture of family support services. The Strengthening Families Strategy incorporates a shift in resources to universal services and improved support to parents, whilst ensuring robust safeguarding arrangements. Common thresholds for specialist services have been implemented by all agencies, alongside implementation of the Common Assessment Framework and Integrated Children's System. There is a robust framework of protocols, staff training and people to provide support and guidance for front-line staff and a formal process for challenging decisions. The new manager in the county call centre screens referrals

and four Common Assessment Framework co-ordinators oversee the process in local areas and are available to all agencies for advice. The new approach is at an early stage but the positive impact is already evident in statistical trends.

Lincolnshire had a slightly higher referral rate than similar areas in 2006/07 but recent authority figures indicate this is steadily reducing. During 2006/07, the proportion of children in need referrals, leading to an initial assessment, increased significantly and was better than comparator and national averages. A very high and much better than average, percentage of these assessments were completed within timescales. The number of core assessments has increased and is now in line with comparators. A higher proportion than average was completed within the required timescale. Authority statistics indicate that the proportion, and timeliness, of initial and core assessments is continuing to improve. There was a slight increase in the number of child protection conferences and a very significant improvement in the number held within the target time, which is now better than both comparator and national averages. The number of children with a child protection plan has fallen from above to below the national average, due in part to de-registration of children who were also looked after. More significant, is the greater confidence of all agencies in the alternative family support services which are developing. Re-registrations remain low. There are timely reviews of nearly all children and young people on the child protection register.

Named nurses for child protection are being appointed, based with specialist social work teams and working closely with health teams in district council areas. Inspection shows that all schools were rated adequate, or above, for providing a safe environment. All children known to be living in private foster places have key workers. Procedures to ensure effective coordination between health and education to track the whereabouts of all children have been implemented. The arrangements will also cover colleges, early years settings and independent schools. A system for notification of the significant number of children placed in the county by other authorities has been implemented.

Lincolnshire is making good progress with the Safer Workforce Project, multi-agency arrangements and performance management for allegations against individuals across all agencies. A Safer Recruitment Toolkit is in use and multi-agency training, including schools, is being provided.

Looked after children receive a good service. Good quality, safe, stable, residential, foster care and adoptive homes meet the needs of most looked after children. The proportion contributing to their review in 2006/07 was much better than similar authorities. Reviews are timely and all are allocated to a qualified social worker. The authority ensures that almost all young people living outside the county have pathway plans and have been allocated a personal adviser. Training for councillors has been awaiting a delayed national training pack; a locally devised programme is available for all councillors, all of whom have now participated in authority business concerning children's services. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive an improving service and almost all have transition plans.

## Area for development

- Develop consistent family support services and embed new thresholds across the county to deliver the Strengthening Families Strategy.

## Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the authority's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The JAR identified a number of strengths, particularly in the achievement of young people; these remain and, in some cases, show further improvement in 2007.

Parents and carers, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, receive effective advice and support. Families who are newly arrived in the area, often from other European countries, benefit from targeted support through the community supporter network and provision of a virtual learning environment to promote effective entry to education.

Early years provision is expanding at a faster rate than that nationally and in similar authorities. Where it has been inspected by Ofsted, a higher proportion of settings were judged good, or better, than found nationally and there were few occasions where action was required to comply with the Children's Act standards. The authority provides thorough training and moderation to ensure that the Foundation Stage profile is assessed accurately.

Attainment improves as children and young people progress through the key stages to be consistently above the national average and the performance of similar authorities by the end of Key Stage 4. Standards at Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with similar authorities and slightly above the national average. At Key Stage 2, standards were broadly average in 2006. Targeted work by the authority to improve results in mathematics appears to have brought about improvement in 2007, particularly at the higher levels and for boys. At Key Stage 3, standards are above those found nationally and in most similar authorities. They are improving at a faster rate in English and science. Children and young people's progress is above the national average. At Key Stage 4, students perform consistently above, and in some cases well above, the national average and that for similar authorities. The progress made by students from the end of Key Stage 2 is well above the national average. Results in 2007 showed improvement again, at notably more than the national average. Children and young people with learning difficulties achieve well overall. Looked after children attend and achieve well.

School inspections indicate that children and young people enjoy school and their personal development is generally good. The Tellus2 survey broadly supports this picture. Overall, a majority of schools in the authority were judged good, or better, and the profile for secondary schools is particularly strong. The school improvement service is rigorous and provides strong support and challenge to schools. A lower

proportion of schools than nationally, and in similar authorities, are in a category of concern, although the pattern for primary schools is close to the national average. There are no secondary, special schools or Pupil Referral Units judged inadequate. The authority is quick to identify schools where there are concerns and takes effective action to promote improvement, including the use of executive headteachers, federations and informal partnerships. The proportion of schools achieving below national floor targets is falling; a significant achievement in a system of a selective secondary education.

Attendance is at least in line with, and unauthorised absence below, the national average. Behaviour is good in the large majority of schools. Fixed-term exclusion rates are falling. However, the authority acknowledges that improvement is required in the rate of permanent exclusions in primary and special schools. It has developed specific funded projects to reduce exclusions in a small number of schools and early data shows a reversal of the trend. Alternative provision, especially for those in Key Stage 4, was regarded as good in the JAR. The authority has rapidly addressed the number of such students receiving less than 20 hours of tuition per week and this is now in the top quartile of performance.

There is a good range of study support and activities, many targeted at vulnerable young people through the youth service and extended school provision. The Tellus2 survey indicates that young people recognise this although they want more places to meet with their friends.

### **Area for development**

- Consolidate the work to reduce permanent exclusions in primary and secondary schools.

## **Making a positive contribution**

**Grade 3**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

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

### **For action in the longer term**

- Ensure that the involvement of all children and young people genuinely shapes services, and routinely provide feedback to them on the outcomes of consultations.

The authority has a very clear commitment to engaging children and young people in consultation and the shaping of services. Consultation was described as good in the JAR and this remains true. Already, the Youth Cabinet has produced a webcast of their meeting to present priorities to elected members. Schools have notice boards dedicated to the Youth Cabinet and other consultative groups. Young people have been involved in appointments within the authority, have designed the logo for the

Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and helped write the children's version of the CYPP. The authority has made good progress on this recommendation.

The authority is strongly supportive of the Hear by Right principles and engages children and young people in devising the questions to be used in its online consultation programme, scheduled to reach all those in the authority in spring 2008. A successful pilot with 550 young people has been completed. The Youth Cabinet is active and increasingly representative of diverse groups, including the Traveller community. Councils are well established in almost all schools and many also have other targeted groups which promote the *Every child matters* agenda and provide children and young people with opportunities to take responsibility, and act on issues, which concern them. There are strong traditions of volunteering through initiatives such as the Millennium Volunteers and Duke of Edinburgh schemes. Good youth services reached the national average for contact with young people. Children and young people's personal development is one of the strongest aspects in school inspection. Behaviour, and attitudes, are almost always good and have not been judged inadequate in any school.

There is effective targeted support for vulnerable children and young people which enables them to contribute to decisions about their future and to engage in activities. Looked after children are represented on the Corporate Parenting Panel and have been involved in the development of an entitlements statement. Specific work with children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities has led to adjusted questions for the online consultation exercise and the production of a DVD to introduce it. Focused youth work and outreach by schools is effective and has introduced young people from migrant communities into activities and promoted community cohesion.

The rate of offending amongst looked after children is lower than the national average. Generally, rates of re-offending, first-time entrants to the Youth Justice system and anti-social behaviour are lower than comparators. The youth service, and partners, provide effective support to those at risk of offending. Participation rates in youth provision match those nationally and are improving. The Youth Service was judged to be good in its recent inspection.

### **Area for development**

- Ensure that consultation with children and young people results in action which increasingly shapes services.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**Grade 4**

### **Summary of strengths and areas for development**

The contribution of the authority's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. It was recognised as good in the JAR and has improved further since then.



The authority supports families very well through the expanding availability of early years settings and places and its extended school provision. Children's centres address needs based on accurate assessments, using nursery or childminder solutions to match either urban or more isolated locations. Information for parents is good and there is very effective targeted support in disadvantaged areas and for particular communities, including families newly arrived from Europe. In particular, parents are successfully assisted to find places for children in schools.

There is a very strong partnership to develop 14–19 education and training with an effective strategy based on seven local areas. There is very effective collaboration between all partners and plans are well advanced. This is demonstrated in the highly successful approval rate for new diploma courses. In addition, there is expanded provision of vocational courses and work-based learning in schools. There is a comprehensive 14–19 prospectus and a common application process has completed its trial stage. The authority's model of 14–19 planning and successful developments are recognised regionally.

Young people achieve very well. The proportion of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications at age 19 is above the national average and in similar authorities. The average points score in GCE A-levels is also above the national average and improving. The proportion of young people not engaged in education, employment or training is falling and well below comparators and the national average. There is a similar picture for those whose activity is not known. Participation rates as young people leave Year 11 are increasing consistently and, at least, in line with comparators. The authority is aware of an increase in employment without training locally, and has commissioned work to address this directly with individual employers. Inspections of schools indicate that sixth form provision is very good. No sixth forms are judged inadequate and nearly a third are outstanding. Those further education colleges inspected were found to be satisfactory or good.

Care leavers and looked after young people receive good support. The proportion in education, employment or training is very good and compares favourably to similar authorities. Support for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also effective. Advice, and guidance, on transition is usually effective and the authority has taken steps to improve provision for those with complex needs. The proportion of these young people engaged in education, employment or training is also well above comparators. Care leavers generally live in suitable accommodation although the JAR indicated that choice, and availability, of housing is limited in some areas. The authority, in conjunction with Aim Higher, education providers and the Connexions service, has worked hard to increase the rate of access to higher education. Figures for 2005 indicated a significant increase in participation among young people from disadvantaged areas, above that regionally. However, figures for 2006 suggest that this pattern may be reversing.

### **Area for development**

- Evaluate the trend of participation in higher education in disadvantaged areas and continue work to promote high aspirations.

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

Grade 3

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The authority's management and capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good. One recommendation emerged from the JAR.

#### For action in the next six months

- Ensure that strategies, procedures and services are in place which meet the diverse needs of all children and their families, including those who are part of transient, and migrant, populations.

The authority has built on the strengths identified in the JAR, responded to the recommendations and further improved services. This confirms that the authority, and its key partners, have a clear shared vision which directs the programme for service improvement. This is linked with wider service plans, based on a needs analysis and a clear understanding of challenges and barriers. Resources are progressively refocused on priority areas. The authority is addressing key workforce shortages in both education and children's social care. Partnership working is strong and already delivering good outcomes. There is a robust corporate performance framework. The progress made since the JAR, and continuing trends in outcomes, confirm the authority has good capacity to improve.

The ambition of the authority is seen in the reorganisation of children's services to meet the new requirements. Action includes the engagement of children, young people and parents in a range of consultations and structures; a fundamental budget review which is redirecting resources with more reshaping planned; investment in partnership working including links with community organisations and the voluntary sector, and work to strengthen schools as the major resource in many communities. However, there is a need to engage a wider range of young people and show them their contribution makes a difference.

The CYPP clearly identifies priorities and responsibilities and is supported by financial and workforce plans which are already making a difference. Information systems are well developed and provide timely and reliable data which is used routinely. Decision making processes are transparent, timely and anticipate need. Project management includes robust risk-assessment. Strong leadership is provided by the lead member for children's services, the director of children's services and other authority and community leaders, supported by effective managers. There are a number of effective joint working arrangements and pooled budgets. The partnership is about to enter a new phase of joint commissioning, supported by joint appointments by the authority and PCT. It is part of a national project to involve parents in commissioning procedures.

Plans recognise the needs of minority communities and the county has a strong record of working with Traveller communities. The authority responded promptly to the challenge of the growing Eastern and Southern European communities, for example, by reallocating resources made available to schools at short notice to respond to sudden increases in numbers of non-English speaking migrants, expanding the community supporters network and developing a virtual learning environment to support entry to education.

The 2007 audit letter concluded that 'the Authority is demonstrating a two-star overall performance and is 'improving well'. Lincolnshire has shown improved results, some of which are significant, in several priority areas.' Financial resources have remained consistent with similar authorities for some years, although the youth service budget is significantly lower than similar authorities. The proportion of gross expenditure on all children's services spent on children in need, but not those who are looked after, has maintained a six year pattern of good performance. It has increased in the last three years, rising to the national average in 2006/07 and confirming the progressive switch of resources to family support. Overall, the authority achieves reasonable value for money.

A new people strategy has been introduced by the authority and there is a developing framework for children's services workforce planning in the authority, increasingly involving partners. The number of vacant social care posts has begun to fall, showing improved performance which is much better than comparators, and vacancies for full-time teachers have been addressed through a successful graduate training programme in the coastal area. Training expenditure remains much higher than comparators. The number of care workers achieving Level 3 in NVQ has increased significantly from a low base.

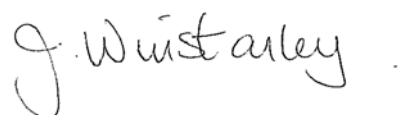
The authority has implemented a new performance management framework and performance data is used actively by the authority, and partnership, to monitor and improve services and to respond to variations. Scrutiny by managers, and councillors, is effective and the authority is aware of strengths and weaknesses in services. The authority responds positively to inspection recommendations, lessons from serious case reviews, benchmarking with other authorities and other external challenges.

### **Area for development**

- Provide greater opportunity for children and young people to shape services.

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 blue ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a trailing dot at the end.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager  
Local Services Inspection