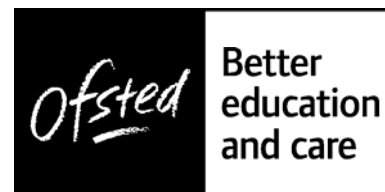


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Mr Colin Pettigrew
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1 December 2005

Dear Mr Pettigrew

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY
COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings following the meeting held on 6 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 satisfactory overall. However there are some significant weaknesses. There is a good level of engagement by schools in the 'Healthy Schools' programme and there has been effective involvement in national piloting of an approach to meeting the health care needs of looked after children. Performance in the year under review was very good. Levels of participation in sport are good and the provision for sex and relationship education is improving. The number of teachers accredited under the national scheme is increasing. An effective drugs and alcohol education links programme is in place.

The social inclusion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a particular challenge in Lincolnshire with issues to be addressed in mainstream schools and care provision. The geographical distribution of services constrains access to them for children with learning difficulties or disabilities. The provision of social care services to children with disabilities has been under close consideration within the Social Services department during the past year and recent changes to line management arrangements reflect this. However it is too early to assess the impact on outcomes.

There have been some regulatory matters in connection with the Authority's provision of residential care for children with disabilities which have not yet been fully resolved.

These relate to the delivery of a range of respite care options whilst meeting the needs of those with complex and long term needs. The challenge of meeting the needs of children and young people with additional needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in an inclusive fashion is recognised as a council priority and is currently the focus of much partnership discussion and planning within the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (C&YPSP). The challenges arise from the geography and population sparsity of Lincolnshire combined with resource issues in terms of recruiting specialist workers. The council has not yet ensured that effective improvements in outcomes for children and their families are demonstrable rather than aspirational. The pace of such improvement needs to increase. There has been a history of undertaking service reviews involving partner agencies and parents with limited evidence of focussed implementation of their outcomes (for example, the Best Value Reviews of CAMHS and Services for Children with Disabilities).

Investment in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) has increased with a rise in the numbers of social workers employed in this service area. However, waiting times in general remain a challenge and particularly so for children in the juvenile justice system with no consistent improvement being achieved despite investment and a joint planning focus. The authority recognises that the provision of a more readily accessible service is key to the achievement of plans in relation to the numbers of children placed out of authority and the length of wait currently experienced by children and families requiring specialist input. At the time of the annual performance assessment meeting it was reported that a key appointment had been made of a CAMHS director to provide strong leadership to drive the improvement agenda. Following a serious case review, which considered bullying and violence in a school setting, the council has recognised the opportunity for an improved CAMHS provision to contribute to the overarching goal of promoting good mental health.

The Authority's role in the context of a complex network of partner agencies and organisations has been impeded by the organisational turbulence during the past 18 months. The report of the Corporate Governance Inspection makes reference to the need for improved community leadership and partnership. This is of particular relevance in this outcome area where a whole system approach is essential to the achievement of health promotion goals.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are generally satisfactory. There is an improved focus on service delivery and the majority of points in the action plan following the Children's Services Inspection of April 2004 have been successfully implemented, with some components falling into ongoing improvement plans. A substantial improvement in reviews of children on the Child Protection Register has been achieved. Performance is above a satisfactory rating and higher on re-registrations as measured in the performance indicators. The re-design of access points and management of responses to referrals

has delivered improvements which link to the Council's adoption of a call-centre approach as a public interface. There is good performance in foster placements and very good performance in adoptions, in terms of numbers of children freed for adoption and the timeliness of decisions. Work remains to develop a shared approach to identifying appropriate thresholds for intervention and this will be developed through the children and young people's strategic partnership and launching the common assessment framework.

Workforce pressures in social services have been addressed in a proactive and creative way, which has had a positive impact upon the allocation of cases and workload management. There is good child protection training across social care and education and a rigorous approach to serious case reviews. One such review has informed current thinking about developing CAMHS as a support and prevention measure. Reviews of children placed out of county are less rigorous and are an essential component of the strategy to reduce external placements and provide services closer to the child's home.

The council is on target to establish the Safeguarding Board in September 2005. The overall strategy and agreement of priorities are finalised; this provides a framework to support coherence and quality in learning from a range of initiatives in this outcome area. There is a need to address the issues of consultation and engagement. The council has performed well in respect of its own regulated services although ensuring the appropriate level of qualification for residential care staff has proved to be a challenge. The issue is being addressed but requires ongoing monitoring and review.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The quality of learning in nursery day care provision has been unsatisfactory compared to the national average. However, there is evidence of improvement recently. Schools in Lincolnshire are generally performing well. Results at all key stages are at or slightly above national averages and above the average for statistical neighbours. The achievement of looked after children is good.

Attendance at school is above the national average and in line with the average for statistical neighbours. School attendance by children in the care system is very good. The council's self-assessment report recognises the rise in the number of school exclusions. Measures are in place to reduce the number of exclusions, but it is too early to assess their impact.

In December 2004, the authority had 16 schools in Ofsted categories of concern, including ten in serious weaknesses and six in special measures. These represent 4% and 1.5% of the schools in Lincolnshire respectively, proportions which are below the national averages but which reflect a slight rise for Lincolnshire compared with previous years. The schools subject to special measures are mainly small, rural primary schools

where the supply of good staff has been limited; four were judged to require special measures during 2004.

The overall number of schools in categories of concern has risen slightly from 14 to 16 and the number of primary schools in special measures has increased from three to six. Only one secondary school is in a category. This school had been judged to have serious weaknesses, but has since made good progress and leadership and management have improved significantly. The one special school in the same category has also made good progress, with the authority having secured a change in leadership and set up a strong core group to manage the school's improvement. The authority has made consistent and effective use of new governors and has also generally assisted in the replacement of unsatisfactory headteachers. It has also helped to foster links between schools. The authority has developed a 'Strategy for School Improvement' which has replaced the previous schools improvement policy and is designed to raise standards further in all schools. It is too early to judge its impact on standards.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The majority of children and young people are given adequate support in managing changes in their lives. There has been a significant investment in the partnership between Connexions, the youth service and schools to promote the engagement of young people, especially those from vulnerable groups, in managing changes in their lives with improved levels of support being made available through the partnership since January 2005. However more investment and a sharper focus is required to improve the coherence of the work in this area which currently appears strategically disjointed and potentially fails to cover some areas of activity.

Contributions by children and young people in the care system to their reviews are at an average level. The authority recognises the need to promote race equality more effectively and to address the mental health needs of young offenders that are currently not readily identified or referred. Youth offending shows a modest reduction, based on the latest (provisional) data that is available. The overall target of a 5% reduction has been met. Support for gifted and talented pupils and looked after children, are good. Work is currently underway to elicit the views of children and young people about services as experienced and future developments and to agree how officers and elected members will take them into account as plans are drawn up for ongoing improvement.

Achieving economic well-being

Provision for students aged 14 to 19 in schools is satisfactory overall and post-16 provision in schools is generally good. Attainment at age 18 is above national and

statistical neighbour averages for students in schools gaining two or more GCE A-Levels. However, the LEA has recognised the need to improve progression post 16 for diverse and vulnerable groups, such as children looked after and migrant workers and their families. There has been a reduction in the numbers of care leavers moving into education or employment, although there has been some improvement in the quality and provision of pathway plans and reviews for this group.

A comprehensive post-16 entitlement plan has been developed, but it is too early to assess the impact in improving progression routes for students. Relationships with the local Learning and Skills Council are at an early stage of development and progress in developing and delivering a strategic approach to wider opportunities post-16 has been slow. The numbers of care leavers engaged in post-16 education, training and employment is satisfactory.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> healthcare assessments of children looked after engagement in the healthy schools project. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> access to CAMHS Services services for, and inclusion of, children with special educational needs and disabilities.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> impact of improved referral arrangements upon access and timeliness of assessment improved focus on service delivery. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> retaining and developing residential care workers of suitable quality numbers on the child protection register managing appropriate thresholds and common assessment.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> overall good achievements in schools good levels of attainment by looked after children. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficult to recognise clear actions and issues to further improve standards in the self assessment report.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the investment in productive partnerships. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the coherence of the overall approach taken by partners actions to promote race equality.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> generally good post 16 provision in schools. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> progression post-16 for students in diverse and vulnerable groups joint work with the LLSC to further improve progression routes.

Service management

Good progress has been made since summer 2004 to address issues arising from the Children's Services Inspection undertaken in April 2004. The pace of overall progress to address the DfES Change for Children agenda has been significantly increased and this work forms a key component of the authority's improvement planning work. The council is on track to meet the timescales defined in The Children's Act. In education, the partnership with the Centre for British Teachers has delivered improvements in school performance. Social Services have an established approach to performance management which has proved to be productive, although the Corporate Governance Inspection report recommends the corporate adoption of a performance management framework. There has been additional investment in social care services to sustain good performance such as in adoption and fostering, and to improve performance in some key areas such as child protection reviews and the response to referrals. The completion of child protection reviews improved markedly during 2004/05.

The council has a number of challenges to address in the context of workforce pressures across the spectrum of children's services and there is evidence of a range of approaches being adopted with some success. These include recruitment from abroad by Social Services, support to new staff moving into the county and investment in training for local people to acquire social care and social work qualifications. In schools, support networks are being developed to support new headteachers and specialist teachers. Given the challenges of rurality and sparsity of population the council is not yet sufficiently innovative in developing new approaches to role development, informed by the current work of the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership. Although the Council recognises the need to support the development of leadership skills its approach is currently somewhat fragmented.

The annual performance assessment meeting confirmed that the identification of children's services priorities supported by an effective needs analysis is ongoing work which is likely to be completed in autumn 2005. This is being undertaken in the context of the children and young people's strategic partnership where key partners are represented. The completion of these processes is essential to the satisfactory progression of the children's agenda.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people:

- services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and accessibility of these services across the county.

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

- development of CAMHS, especially in the context of access.

Staying safe

Agencies collaborate to safeguard children according to the requirements of current government guidance:

- workforce retention and quality, with a recognition of opportunities to develop roles and skills base
- thresholds for service and their operation.

Enjoying and achieving

Educational provision is made for children who do not attend school:

- the impact of policies to reduce the number of exclusions.

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:

- achievement of targets for attainment for children looked after and care leavers.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:

- improvement strategies and leadership require an integrated approach.

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 impact of entitlement on post 16 opportunities, including progression opportunities for students in diverse and vulnerable groups.

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: Lincolnshire County 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	2
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
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	2

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