

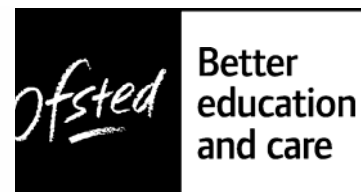
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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Ms S Mulvany  
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**1 December 2005**

Dear Ms Mulvany

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

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on Monday 4 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 your colleagues to discuss relevant issues. We are sorry that, due to illness, you were not available to attend the meeting, and hope that you are now fully recovered.

### **Being healthy**

Outcomes in this area are generally good, with improvements evident in both social care and education services and evidence of some good partnership working. Healthy lifestyles are effectively promoted in schools with an above average proportion participating in the Healthy Schools Standard. The incidence of teenage pregnancy in the county as a whole is declining and the council is making good progress towards meeting its 2010 target, having already met an interim reduction target of 15%. However, the rate for under 16 year-olds remains higher than the national rate. The authority has targeted strategies, as part of an overall Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, to tackle an increase in conception rates in particular districts and is making some headway in reducing rates.

There is evidence that the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is developing across the county, although the council acknowledges that its effectiveness is variable across the eight Primary Care Trust areas and has appointed a CAMHS coordinator to improve the coordination and consistency of the service to promote further improvement in access and early intervention. The timeliness of assessments for young people with acute mental health needs referred by the Youth Offending Team is good with an additional social worker linked to this service. The council's performance in meeting the health needs of looked after children has

improved and is now good. The promptness of referrals of young offenders requiring a substance misuse assessment is improving according to the council's self-assessment which reports that 64% of young offenders requiring an assessment receive it within five working days, and 87% of young offenders requiring an intervention receive one within 10 days. Further improvement is required in relation to this which may be brought about by the significant increase in the number of substance misuse workers now employed by the council.

## **Staying safe**

Outcomes are satisfactory overall. Considerable progress has been made by the council in this area, although there remain significant weaknesses in the front-line service in relation to assessment waiting times.

In a number of key areas relating to child protection work performance has improved or good performance has been sustained, with 97.3% of children on the child protection register reviewed within timescale, 100% of children on the register allocated a social worker, low re-referral rates onto the register and also low de-registrations where children have been on the register for more than two years. These are indicators of effective child care practice.

However, while there has been a significant increase in the percentage of initial assessments which are undertaken within seven working days of referral, at 52.6%, this remains below the comparator figure for similar councils of 64.7%. This is not satisfactory and creates risks for those 47% of referrals waiting for a period in excess of seven working days for an initial assessment, this leading to potential delays in protection, support or service provision. There has also been a significant increase in the percentage of core assessments undertaken within 35 working days to 54.6%, although this percentage likewise is below the comparator figure for similar councils of 67.8%. Further action is needed to secure improvements in performance in respect of initial and core assessments. The council increased its workforce at the end of the year, and this has the potential to impact favourably in this area. In addition a pilot project using a revised system and tracking methods at Rossendale is proving successful.

The council must concentrate efforts on establishing whether, and if necessary ensuring that, children and families in need from minority ethnic groups are able to have equal access to services as the available data indicates that this may not be the case. The data show that the proportion of looked after children from minority ethnic groups to that of the population is 0.7, compared to the comparator figure for similar councils of 1.7, and the ratio of minority ethnic children in need to that of the population is 0.9 compared to a ratio of 1.3 for similar councils.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes in this area are good. The overall quality of nursery education is good and childcare providers receive appropriate advice and support. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 are all above national averages, although they remain slightly below those of statistical neighbours. The rate of improvement in results over recent years is good. At Key Stage 2, results are all higher than national averages and those of statistical neighbours. Pupils make good progress between Key Stage 1 and 2 and attain especially well in mathematics. At Key Stage 3 all results are better than national averages and are, except in English, above those of statistical neighbours. The percentage of pupils gaining five A\* to C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) has improved and is above the national average and results for statistical neighbours. However, at both Key Stage 3 and 4, most pupils only make the progress expected of them based on their prior attainment and a few under-perform, especially at Key Stage 3. The performance of pupils from minority ethnic groups is improving and is carefully monitored through the education development plan. The proportion of looked after children who gain one or more GCSE has decreased and is low. More effective use of personal education plans for these pupils is seen by the council as a priority with a greater degree of information sharing between social care workers and schools than has previously existed. An increase in the number of vocational options for all pupils has been made available through the 14 to 19 strategy.

Levels of unauthorised absence in schools are all lower than national averages but in secondary schools the level increased in 2003/04. As a result of action taken to support a group of secondary schools with comparatively high levels of absence, the council predicts a decrease for 2004/05. While the rate of exclusions at primary level is in line with both national averages and statistical neighbours, at secondary level it is higher. The authority is using several innovative approaches to reduce the levels of exclusions including the use of a personalised curriculum support service with dedicated learning mentors for pupils at risk of exclusion. Early data for 2004/05 show a reduction in exclusions.

School improvement services provide effective support for schools. The number of schools placed in a category of concern following inspection is very low compared to the national picture. In 2004, only two schools were in the special measures category. The council's provision of youth services is very good. Young people have high levels of achievement and receive good advice and guidance.

## **Making a positive contribution**

Outcomes in this area are good. The authority has been successful in substantially reducing the number of first time offenders in 2004. Rates of re-offending by those who have been in custody have increased but are lower than the national average.

The majority of children and young people are given adequate support in managing change in their lives. The authority uses the views of children and young people effectively in a number of ways, for example through the work of the youth service, through feedback from a dedicated group for care leavers, and in preparation of the 14 to 19 strategy, and there is evidence of some innovation in gathering this information. The Youth Council is highly developed and productive in its work. The collection of views through schools is developing and includes school councils, questionnaires and other forums. However, only three quarters of looked after children contribute their opinions at reviews and this is lower than in statistical neighbours. The provision of advice and guidance for young people is nationally recognised as an area of good practice.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

Outcomes in this area are good. Sixth form provision is effective and educational attainment is better than national averages. Collaboration between key partners, including the local Learning and Skills Council, is productive and has resulted in the recent finalisation of a 14 to 19 strategy following a period of extensive consultation with stakeholders. Six 'Travel to Learn' areas have been identified and progress in implementing the strategy is carefully monitored. Overall the percentage of young people not in education, employment or training has fallen; however, the volume of young people undertaking work-based learning is low. The percentage of young people leaving care who progress into education, training or employment is improving with further increases projected.

### **SUMMARY**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promotion of looked after children's health care</li> <li>• promotion of the Healthy School's initiative</li> <li>• overall reduction in the incidence of teenage pregnancy</li> <li>• productive consultation with young people in the development of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promotion of children and young people's mental health</li> <li>• the substance misuse service</li> <li>• further reduction in under 16 pregnancy rates in areas where rates are high.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective child protection work</li> <li>• short-term stability.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduction in timescales for initial and core assessments</li> <li>• access for minority ethnic children and families.</li> </ul>

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of early years provision</li> <li>• effective support for all schools</li> <li>• above average performance at all key stages</li> <li>• a very good youth service.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the rate of exclusions in secondary schools</li> <li>• the percentage of looked after children gaining GCSEs.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduction in the rates of first offence</li> <li>• the work of the youth service in providing advice and guidance               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the work of the youth council.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the percentage of looked after young people who contribute to reviews.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good collaboration with local learning and skills council and other partners in developing and implementing a 14 to 19 strategy</li> <li>• effective post-16 provision.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participation rates in work-based learning.</li> </ul>

## Service Management

The council has made positive progress in establishing a children's services directorate and an executive director has been in post for a year. The new directorate is in the process of aligning its five priorities to the Every Child Matters outcomes and in formulating a children's and young people's plan. A children's and young people's partnership is already in place with wide representation from all relevant bodies. There is much effective collaboration between partner organisations, the community and the authority to prioritise local needs, for example in the development and implementation of a programme to develop 30 children's centres across the county.

Self-assessment is detailed and clearly states where action has been taken and the outcome. Some areas of weakness are not clearly identified and a sharper focus on outcomes from social care provision is needed. There is much work taking place and the rate of progress is generally good; however in several areas, such as the alignment of directorate priorities to Every Child Matters and improvements in the educational attainment of looked after children, progress is slower. In several areas including some front line services, outcomes are not yet consistently good enough. The Education Development Plan and post inspection action plans are used rigorously to ensure that the required improvements are made. Performance management is well established and actual performance is carefully monitored by

senior managers through performance improvement boards and by half-yearly scrutiny by elected members. The council provides good value for money and 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:*

- partnership work with the Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Scheme.

### **Staying safe**

*The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:*

- initial and core assessments.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

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

- the educational attainment of looked after children.

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

- exclusion rates.

### **Making a positive contribution**

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

- the use of children's and young peoples' views in developing the work of the council.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

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

- implementation of the 14 to 19 Strategy.

## 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: Lancashire County Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements <sup>1</sup>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	<b>2</b>
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	<b>3</b>

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### 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