

17 December 2008

Ms Phyllis Dunipace
Executive Director, Children and Young People's Service
London Borough of Lambeth
7th Floor, International House
Canterbury Crescent
Brixton
London
SW9 7QE

Dear Ms Dunipace

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Lambeth 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.¹

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.

¹ Data yet to be confirmed

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	3
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3

*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

The London Borough of Lambeth consistently delivers services for children and young people that are above minimum requirements in a context of complex local needs and high challenge. The council's capacity to improve, including its management of services, is good. The clear and challenging ambitions for the borough are based on a shared understanding of local needs and effective multi-agency working between partner organisations. Good progress in the integration of children's services has been achieved through robust Children's Trust arrangements. The Children and Young People's Plan is reviewed annually and its priorities are revised in line with up-to-date needs analysis and consultation.

Good improvements have been secured in response to most of the 2007 APA recommendations with some challenges remaining. There has been a coherently planned shift to offering preventive services to families. This work has been supported by the effective use of the common assessment framework, the lead professional role and the team around the child approach. Impact is particularly evident in the outstanding contribution services make to helping children and young people contribute positively to society. Rates of offending and re-offending are reducing through a wide range of targeted interventions and motivational activities. The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk, or requiring safeguarding is good as a result of an effective local safeguarding children's board. Successful work with the high number of children who have child protection plans ensures that few remain on the child protection register for lengthy periods. Whilst there is more work to do in establishing a trend of rising standards in all core subjects across education phases, the strong focus on improving school capacity is reflected in the high success rate of schools as reported in Ofsted inspections.

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

- High levels of performance in a range of preventative health initiatives.
- Good and improving access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) with 24 hour emergency cover and a comprehensive service for 16-17-year-olds including services to those looked after children placed out of borough.
- Comprehensive health services are available to children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with integrated health teams and clear referral routes and pathway plans.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Infant mortality rates remain higher than comparator areas.
- Whilst levels of teenage pregnancy are falling at a significant rate, they are still considerably higher than national levels and those in comparator areas.

Staying safe

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

- A wide range of high quality prevention services, including constructive interventions, support families at risk of breakdown.
- Outstanding corporate parenting arrangements with a decreasing use of residential placements and increased stability in foster placements.
- Good multi-agency action to support families affected by domestic violence with prevention work undertaken using media and designated domestic violence advisors.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Delays in completing initial and core assessments leading to delays in accessing support services, including direct payments for some families.
- Whilst numbers placed for adoption or special guardianship are increasing, they are still well below comparator areas.

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- Most children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups, make better progress than expected given their starting points, and achieve well in relation to their capability. The strong trend of improving standards in Key Stage 4 has been sustained.
- Good quality provision and improved attendance have contributed to good educational progress for looked after children, a significant rise in standards at Key Stage 4 and a closing of the attainment gap. The percentage of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with five higher-grade GCSEs is well above neighbour and national averages.

- Primary and secondary attendance have improved significantly, secondary is now above statistical neighbours and the national average.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Whilst support for learning and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved, the proportion of children gaining the expected levels is low compared to national averages.
- The proportion of pupils achieving level 5 and above in English in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 has fallen significantly.

Making a positive contribution

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.

Major strengths

- Highly effective preventative action is reducing anti-social behaviour and crime committed by children and young people. There has been a good reduction in numbers of first time entrants to the criminal justice system.
- A much improved youth offending service has achieved a significant reduction in the rate of re-offending among young people.
- There is a high level of participation in consultation which is far-reaching, innovative and well established. Children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups, have very good opportunities to contribute to the development of services at a strategic level.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

Achieving economic well-being

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 percentage of 17-year-olds in education, training or employment has improved significantly, including the engagement of all ethnic groups and the above average record for engaging teenage mothers. There has been improved take-up by other vulnerable groups, for example, those with learning difficulties and disabilities and young offenders.
- A good 14–19 strategy, based on effective collaboration and thorough

procedures for assessing learning needs, ensures a relevant 14–19 curriculum for all groups, including the disaffected and vulnerable. This is reflected in the significant increase in young people achieving Levels 2 and 3 by age 19.

- Pathway and transition plans for vulnerable and other groups are monitored effectively and reviews are used to make improvement. Almost all young people contribute to their reviews and are positive about service provision and delivery.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Overall NVQ success rates in work-based learning remain below average. Whilst there has been an increase in the number of young people completing an apprenticeship, performance does not compare favourably with neighbours. The proportion of young males entering work-based learning is much lower than the national average.

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

Grade 3

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good and its management of these services is good. Vision and priorities are underpinned by comprehensive data analysis and supported by well coordinated multi-agency plans. The local strategic partnership works well together. There is very effective collaboration with key partners such as the police. The council has put in place clear plans to secure further improvement in services and has developed an effective preventative approach. Its recent track record shows that the majority of targets are met. The council's systems for monitoring performance are rigorous and strongly led by senior managers and members. There is sufficient financial capacity and value for money is good. Mostly accurate self-assessment has improved as demonstrated in the council's clearer understanding of where to concentrate effort. Whilst good improvement has been secured in many areas, for example unvalidated 2008 key stage 3 outcomes show improvement, there are other challenges remaining which were identified by the APA in 2007. Workforce planning and development is clear including a strategy for recruitment, retention and staff development. There have been improvements in social care recruitment and retention but this remains an ongoing issue.

Major strengths

- Good prioritisation is underpinned by comprehensive data that is very well analysed and used to inform planning and service delivery.
- Established and effective multi-agency partnerships provide excellent early intervention and prevention.
- The council's arrangements for performance management are well-led and robust.

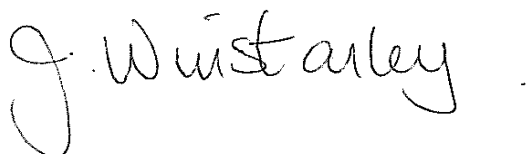
Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ There is a high turnover of social work staff and staff shortages in some key areas.▪ Some of the areas identified by the 2007 APA have not been fully addressed. |
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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 black ink that reads "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection