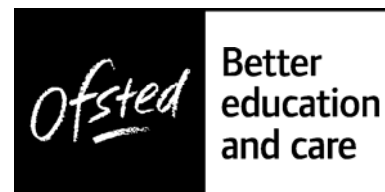


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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Phyllis

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF LAMBETH

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local 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.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	4
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

Lambeth Council delivers services above minimum requirements for children and young people. The council is securing improvements in outcomes across the majority of service areas. The contribution of social care services to maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people has strengthened and is good. Considerable headway has been made with the integration of services. Collaborative planning is embedded and is clearly driven by the objectives of Every Child Matters. Joint commissioning requires further development. Good progress has been made in the majority of areas for improvement from last year's APA, although some key challenges remain. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) sets clear targets based on a sound analysis of need. The council has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Leadership at a senior level across the service is strong and the council has excellent capacity to further improve its services.

Being healthy

The council makes a good contribution to improving the health of children and young people in the area and outcomes are improving. Agencies are working closely to promote health. Good progress has been made against a number of key health indicators: infant mortality and smoking in pregnancy have reduced; breastfeeding has increased and rates of immunisation have improved.

There is good involvement of the National Health Service (NHS) in the delivery of the council's children's centres strategy and a number of centres are working towards the Healthy Schools Standard. The majority of the authority's primary and secondary schools are also seeking to achieve the standard and good progress is being made with accreditation. There has been an effective focus on improving the nutritional value of school meals. Take up and satisfaction levels have increased. The council has a school sports partnership in place and participating schools have increased the amount of physical education delivered.

There are appropriate multi-agency strategies for improving mental health and reducing substance misuse, particularly amongst vulnerable children including those looked after and young offenders. Child and adolescent mental health capacity has been increased through the establishment of new posts; specialist staff are involved in the delivery of programmes run by Sure Start and the Behaviour and Education Support Team (BEST); a specialist service for looked after children is in place and operational protocols with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) have been strengthened. There is a clear strategy in place to engage hard-to-reach young people through targeted posts, outreach pilots, mentoring and consultation with service users. A specialist post is in place to address the mental health needs of refugee children. Compared to statistical neighbours, relatively high numbers of young offenders receive timely assessment of substance misuse problems and subsequent specialist intervention. Protocols are in place with schools to identify and secure treatment for young people who misuse substances.

There is strong health service commitment to looked after children with additional resources provided this year to expand the general health and mental health services for this group. There has been significant improvement in routine health assessments of looked after children and increased specialist input into training for staff and carers.

Reducing teenage pregnancy remains a major challenge for the council and partners. Although conception rates for 15 to 17 year olds have shown a slight reduction, they do not compare well with the performance of councils nationally or that of comparator groups. However, there is clear prioritisation of teenage pregnancy and sexual health issues in the CYPP and strong corporate and operational leadership for the local strategy. Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) resources have been allocated to target this area.

The council is strongly promoting the registration of children with disabilities. Appropriate specialist services are in place to meet the health needs of this group.

Staying safe

The council makes a good contribution to securing the safety of children and young people. All children on the child protection register have allocated social workers and all child protection reviews are completed as required. Although there has been a reduction, there are too many children remaining on the child protection register for more than two years. The low level of re-registrations continues to fall, maintaining good performance in this area. Numbers of repeat referrals have decreased markedly. All child protection concerns referred to the assessment service trigger core assessments and compliance with timescales for completing these assessments has improved slightly. However, fewer initial assessments were completed within timescales set and compliance remains at a low level.

A Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is in place with strong engagement at a strategic level from health, education and the community and voluntary sectors. A multi-agency training strategy is being implemented and sub-groups of the LSCB monitor and review practice.

Staff and carers working with children and young people are provided with comprehensive guidance and training on child protection. The effectiveness of pupils' care, well-being and health and safety was judged to be good or better in schools inspected.

All looked after children have allocated social workers. Placement changes have been reduced although longer term placement stability needs further improvement. The proportion of looked after children in fostering placements or placed for adoption remains below that in comparator authorities although an increasing number of looked after children are fostered by family or friends. Numbers of children adopted have increased significantly, although fewer were placed for adoption in a timely manner. Too many reviews of looked after children are not held within required timescales. The

council is alert to the placement needs of looked after children from new communities including Eastern Europe.

Numbers of children on the child protection register and looked after remain relatively high. The implementation of major national initiatives including information sharing and the common assessment framework remain at an early stage. Protocols between social services teams and Sure Start projects have been strengthened to improve access of families to relevant support services. However, there continues to be a low level of relative investment in family support and preventative services.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the council makes to ensuring children and young people achieve and enjoy their education and leisure activities is good. The Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that parents and carers are involved in supporting young learners. There has been an effective focus on supporting families from minority ethnic backgrounds and families where children are vulnerable or have learning difficulties or disabilities.

Early years' provision has been extended with 11 children's centres established and a further three on track for approval by Sure Start by September. The development of Sure Start programmes and children's centres has involved parents in making decisions about childcare provision. Nursery provision is freely available to all 3 and 4 year olds. There has been good growth in provision. Inspection shows that the quality of nursery education is in line with the national average. There is evidence that childcare is of lower quality overall, with some weaknesses in out-of-school provision. The authority has appropriate strategies in place to address these issues.

In Key Stages 1 to 4 most children make good progress given their starting points. The trend of improvement established over time is in line with or exceeds the national average in each key stage. In view of the level of challenge presented by the contextual features of the authority this is a significant achievement. In Key Stage 1, the council recognises that closing the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in reading and writing, and improving attainment in reading, are priorities. In Key Stage 4, attainment continues to improve. The proportion of higher GCSE grades is close to the national average and is in line with that of neighbours.

There is a strong commitment to improving outcomes for all groups within the diverse community served by the council. The progress of all students is monitored and underachievement is tackled when it is identified. Minority ethnic students are well supported. Evidence from inspection confirms that the majority of children with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. The attendance of looked after children has improved and higher numbers sit GCSEs. Year 11 results for looked after students show good improvement. However, the proportion of all young people leaving care with GCSE or equivalent qualifications has fallen after a period of sustained improvement. Not all looked after children have personal education plans.

School improvement is an area of strength. The council provides highly effective support to schools causing concern. There are no schools in Ofsted's formal categories of concern. This position has been sustained in mainstream schools for over three years. The Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which was judged to require special measures in June 2004 has been closed and a new leadership team is establishing an all-age secondary phase PRU.

Absence rates over time have fallen in primary and secondary phases. In the latter, they are below the national average. In the primary phase progress is slower. The impact of strategies to increase attendance has been limited with current figures showing no improvement. Numbers of exclusions are below average in secondary schools but remain higher in primary schools. The national Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP) is in place in four secondary schools and is having a positive impact.

There is a good variety of recreational activities available to children and young people that contribute to their development and enhance their enjoyment and achievement. The council has been successful in encouraging high levels of engagement.

Making a positive contribution

The council's contribution to outcomes in this area is good. There are effective strategies in place for consulting and involving children and young people in decision making. The work of the Youth Council has won national acclaim. A number of other imaginative mechanisms are in place for young people to inform the development of services in the council, including the town centre area youth forums. These initiatives provide opportunities for young people to develop skills including surveying, peer educating and mentoring. However, the council recognises the need to ensure that the views of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are included more fully. The social and emotional development of children, particularly those who are vulnerable, is well supported through a number of successful initiatives. For example, Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) offer a wide range of parenting support.

Children and young people are well supported in facing challenges in their lives. The services available are tailored to the needs of the diverse community and help young people to develop life skills and take responsibility. A Children and Adults' Partnership Board is working to improve transition arrangements for young people with disabilities and continuing care needs.

The council has a strong commitment to involving looked after children in decision making. A consultative group is in place with young people's views feeding into the Corporate Parenting Board. Four young people sit on this board. Other consultative and celebratory events are held with looked after children and care leavers. However, there is room for improvement in the numbers of looked after children who participate in their statutory reviews.

Offending remains a challenge for the council. Referrals to the YOT have increased and there is evidence of rising recidivism. However, there is an appropriate focus on prevention and promising reductions in offending by young people attending Youth Inclusion Projects (YIPs). Offending by looked after children has reduced. A robust improvement plan for the YOT is in place with an appropriate focus on performance management and training.

Achieving economic well-being

The council's contribution to outcomes in this area is good. There has been a significant reduction in the number of children and young people not in education, employment and training, particularly for those leaving care. Good progress is being made in developing a wider curriculum and a more coherent approach to 14 to 19 education. Strengthening links between schools and colleges are improving the range of vocational choices for 14 to 16 year olds. The need to increase Level 1 and 2 vocational courses is recognised. The council is working to produce a Lambeth guarantee to broaden 14 to 19 provision. The Additional Learning Brochure and an innovative web site give schools, students and parents clear information about the vocational programmes available. Young people receive good advice and guidance with effective support provided by the Connexions service. Partnership with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is becoming a strength. Collaboration has helped to accelerate progress with implementing the 14 to 19 strategy.

The proportion of Year 11 school leavers continuing in education has increased, including high levels of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Post-16 results show significant improvement. While the average points score in GCE A/VCE/AS subjects is still well below the national average, the gap is narrowing.

Too many young people aged 14 to 16 remain without a school place. However, progress with reducing the number of known young people missing education is good, falling from over 700 three years ago to 109 in 2006. The new secondary PRU offers students without a school place basic skills and pastoral care provision until a school place is found for them. Options for placing students are constrained as secondary schools are full. The strategic plan for Building Schools for the Future is being successfully implemented and will give greater flexibility in the provision of school places.

Outcomes for care leavers are improving with more living in suitable accommodation and in education, employment or training at 19 years of age. All care leavers have Personal Advisors and there are high levels of Pathway Plans in place. Collaboration with the housing department and Connexions service is good.

Procedures to support transitions for young people are established but too few transitional plans are in place.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

There is robust management of children's services in the council and, overall, outcomes for service users are improving. Capacity for further improvement is excellent.

There is strong ambition across the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) to improve outcomes. A CYPP has been produced involving the contributions of children and carers. It is based on a broad assessment of need which details clear priorities and challenging targets. Governance structures are well established within the broader Local Strategic Partnership and the CYPSP Board reviews and monitors performance across agencies against Every Child Matters objectives. The local voluntary and community sector is engaged at a strategic level and in the delivery of key programmes.

A strategic commissioning framework has been agreed between children's services and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and some pooled budgets are in place. Whilst commissioning and contracting arrangements have been strengthened, joint commissioning is an area for development.

Raising achievement and eradicating inequality are central to the shared vision of the CYPSP. Self-assessment shows a good understanding of strengths and areas for development. Support for schools is effective and well targeted. The council has successfully focused on improving capacity in schools and social care services through effective leadership and self-evaluation.

The council's APA self assessment demonstrates a clear commitment to developing preventative services in the borough. Nevertheless, relative spend on family support services remains low and unit costs of services for looked after children are increasing significantly. These expenditure patterns constrain the expansion of preventative work.

The council has made progress in many of the areas for improvement identified in the APA in 2005. It has also, appropriately, focused on further developing performance management and quality assurance systems. Fewer staff left posts in social care last year and sickness levels were reduced. Although the council has now put measures in place to address recruitment difficulties, rising vacancies in social care services remains a concern.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improving health outcomes for young children improving healthcare for looked after and other vulnerable children increased capacity of child and adolescent mental health services. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> further improvement in young people's sexual health and reduction in teenage pregnancy access of young people to treatment for substance misuse.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cross agency collaboration to safeguard children fewer repeat referrals increased rate of adoption of looked after children. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more timely assessments of children's needs duration of children on the child protection register more timely placement for adoption of looked after children.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustained trend of improvement in attainment school improvement services growth in early years' provision. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in Key Stage 1, attainment in reading and reduction of the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in reading and writing the attainment of looked after children; school attendance in the primary phase.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consultation with children and young people promotion of children's and young people's life skills wide range of parenting support. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> management of YOT to secure improved outcomes for young people.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective collaboration between schools and colleges in the development of 14 to 19 provision partnership with the Learning and Skills Council progress in reducing numbers of children and young people not in education, employment or training. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continued development of level one and two vocational courses further improvement in post-16 attainment further reduction of numbers of children and young people not in education, employment and training.

<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving outcomes across the majority of service areas • collaboration between agencies to meet the diverse needs of children • commitment to the participation and involvement of children and their carers. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of joint commissioning • investment in family support and preventative services • further embedding of performance management systems.
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Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

- Impact of the authority's actions to raise standards in schools and post-16 settings.
- Effectiveness of the Youth Offending Team in securing improved outcomes for children and young people.
- Impact of the authority's strategy to improve recruitment and retention in children's social care.
- Progress in developing joint commissioning in the authority.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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Commission for Social Care Inspection