

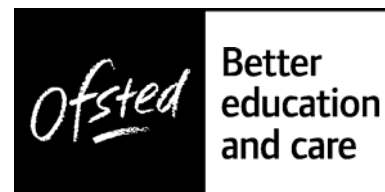
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Making Social Care  
Better for People



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**1 December 2005**

Dear Ms Dunipace

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF LONDON BOROUGH OF LAMBETH'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 20 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and children's social care services within your authority. We are grateful for the information that 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 and improving, particularly in the way that healthy lifestyles are promoted through much better partnership between key services. In this context, the more solid relationships between the council and health services, previously a weak area, bode well, as do initiatives such as 14 new children's centres planned to open in the next 12 months to support children up to the age of five and their families.

Priorities are defined in the self-assessment, supported by the use of information from the Schools Health Education Unit Report (SHEU). Participation in sport is good in schools; overall 55% of schools are working towards the National Healthy Schools Standard and 32% of schools where 20% or more pupils are entitled to free school meals have achieved the standard. The SHEU report also refers to the excellence of stress counselling for year 9 students and their teachers.

The health needs of looked after children are met increasingly effectively. In 2003/04, only 44% of these children had their health needs met; in 2004/05 this had risen to 60%; and the plan for 2005/06 is 75%. This is a good example of how Lambeth has begun to address the previous serious children's social care weaknesses, in this case by the targeted effort of dedicated clinical and administrative teams. Further work is also

in hand to tackle more effectively the health needs of children with disabilities, predominantly by improved cooperation between the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the council.

The number of social workers who work as part of the multidisciplinary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team is low in comparison with comparator groups. Police confirmed that they have good access to CAMHS as a frequent first point of contact with young people in difficulty. There is generally timely referral of acute matters to CAMHS of young people known to the youth offending team, but performance for non-acute referrals is poorer. A stronger partnership between the council and health services is developing and the capacity for further development of CAMHS work is therefore promising.

The incidence of teenage pregnancy is high, and recognised as a challenge to the council. The teenage pregnancy strategy seeks to reduce this high level. It has been risk assessed as of concern with 'promising' prospects for the future by the DfES. As yet insufficient use has been made of the youth service to tackle teenage pregnancy or to build on its reported strength in addressing substance misuse.

The self-assessment, while addressing many significant issues, did not refer to wider health issues such as breastfeeding, infant mortality, immunisation, smoking, primary care and hospital waiting times, or the outcomes of current strategies such as drug action work.

## **Staying safe**

Outcomes in this area are now satisfactory and improving quickly. A year ago children's social care services were a matter of serious concern to CSCI and the council. A children's services inspection in 2005 confirmed the much-needed improvements, but further work is required to address wider issues, such as meeting the identified weaknesses in the initial registration inspections of childcare.

Schools, the police and youth services are well briefed on child protection issues. The youth service is making a good contribution to community safety through its contribution to crime reduction. Ofsted judged the effectiveness of pupil's care, welfare, health and safety to be at least satisfactory in those schools inspected, and very good in some.

Improvements in children's social care are noted in many of the performance indicators, but the council remains in the lower quartile in terms of comparative national performance. It is recognised that the council has had to make progress from a very poor performance base. Quality assurance systems have become more central to the council's improvement discussions. More management information is going both to senior managers and to those with direct practice responsibilities, through an

improved management and practice support structure. The children's services inspection resulted in a detailed local improvement agenda.

Over the forthcoming year the council appropriately plans to improve further its level of assessments on children referred within seven days from 55%, but the target of 60% seems modest. Core assessments completed within 35 days have risen from 53% to 64%, but further improvement is needed.

Performance indicators suggest that the child protection register is now more actively managed. All cases are reviewed as required. Work is in hand to ensure that issues of thresholds are better understood across agencies, especially with health and schools, and that where there are referrals from outside agencies there is good information exchange that includes feedback from the council in response to referrals. Interagency work to support the protection of vulnerable children, especially between schools, health and social care, is a strength.

The relatively high and above average numbers of looked after children requires greater ongoing attention. Placement stability indicators have improved over the last year, supported further by a positive fostering inspection this year. Adoption work requires further improvement in order to maintain present trends. Only 50% of adoptions occurred within 12 months of the 'best interest' decision in 2004/05. All looked after children have a named social worker. An average proportion (82%) of looked after children aged under 10 are in foster care, and more is being done to place them within the council area. Plans are in place to reduce the use of residential provision, but it is recognised that Lambeth has a problem in addressing an historic high number of looked after adolescents, a consequence of the previously poorly managed service.

Equalities have an appropriately high profile in the council. Although policies are subject to race impact assessment the effect on service quality is not always demonstrated.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes in this area are good. There have been significant improvements to children's achievements and attainments in the authority's schools in the last three years. Support for early years work is good. This work contributes effectively to raising standards and to the promotion of social inclusion. There is a highly effective Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, which encourages good collaborative working between providers and agencies. Language and literacy teaching in nursery education are judged to be well above the standards seen nationally.

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Standards at Key Stage 1 are improving and have improved significantly in 2003/04. While the results are below the national average, they compare favourably with similar authorities. Test results at Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics have shown good improvements over the last three years and are now well above those achieved in similar authorities. Children's attainment in English is especially impressive. These outcomes have improved significantly and now match the national average. Children make very good progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 with on-going improvement.

Test results at Key Stage 3 show a steady improvement in English and mathematics. Results in English are now close to the national average and mathematics is not far behind. Science is lagging, but still compares well to similar authorities. The percentage of children gaining 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C has improved considerably over the last 5 years. In 1999/00 less than a third of children succeeded on this measure: in 2003/04 just over a half of them did. The authority now matches the national average for this measure. The value added between both Key Stage 2 and GCSE and Key Stage 3 and GCSE is very high. Children are reaching higher standards than might be expected given their prior attainment. GCSE results for looked after children also show good improvements, but the gap between their achievements and those of their peers remains a concern. Achievements in youth work settings are good.

The authority provides very effective support to schools placed in formal categories of concern by Ofsted. The number of such schools has declined sharply in the last five years and the authority currently has only one school, a Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit, in special measures. There are clear plans to improve the work in this unit, which are now being taken forward. The authority makes good use of national and local performance data in its schools and bases school improvement on accurately assessed local needs. School self-evaluation is a key feature of the approach taken to improving schools.

The authority has been very successful in reducing the number of unauthorised absences in secondary schools. These rates have declined significantly over the last four years and are now below the national average. The authority has had less success in primary schools, where unauthorised absences have remained persistently well above the national average. The pattern is similar for permanent exclusions. Attendance by looked after children is improving from previously very high levels of absence.

## **Making a positive contribution**

Outcomes in this area are good and improving. There are broad ranging strategies for achieving social inclusion. The council prides itself on the efforts taken to consult with young people through the Youth Council and in particular the current efforts to seek the views of disabled young people. The council recognises that future improvement in this outcome area will also need to be based on enhancing educational attainment overall.

In early years settings, initial registration inspections highlight some matters that need to be addressed including working in partnership with parents and behaviour issues in some of the childcare settings.

Levels of re-offending are lower than the national average, but show a recent rise. The number of first time offenders coming into the criminal justice system has also increased. Final warnings for looked after children are at acceptable levels. A recent Youth Offending Team inspection highlighted management weaknesses, which are now being addressed. Ten truancy sweeps in partnership with the police were attributed with achieving improved pupil attendance. Further evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the various initiatives remains as a challenge to the council.

Some 81% of vulnerable young people contribute to their social care reviews, and this is good. However, more attention now needs to be paid to the impact of their contribution by the new Corporate Parenting Board.

A number of challenges remain, and they are recognised by the authority. These include transition arrangements for looked after children out of borough, with a particular focus on their education plans; and more rigorous attention to transition planning and arrangements for children with disabilities. Further work is required on helping those with ongoing mental health needs as they become adults. Specifically, just 50% of children with disabilities have a transition plan to support their move to adult services. These challenges are intended to be addressed through the council's integration of children's services agenda.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

Outcomes in this area are good, supported by effective partnership working. There have been considerable improvements in the partnerships between the local Learning and Skills Council, the college and the authority, which are now starting to lead to a wider curriculum offering for 14-19 year olds. Young people receive good advice and guidance, with excellent support provided by the Connexions service. Rates of participation in post-16 education have improved significantly and are now above the national average. There has been good progress in creating a more coherent approach to post-16 provision with improvements in the vocational offering for 14-16 year olds, mainly due to closer links between schools and colleges. While too many young people

aged 14-16 remain without a school place, plans to increase provision at secondary level are well advanced.

The percentage of looked after children who are in education, employment or training at age 19 has improved rapidly over the last four years and is now very good. Some 60% of these children are now in education, employment and training, which places the authority in the top band of performance.

Attainment in school sixth forms is unsatisfactory. Although there are no inadequate school sixth forms in the authority, students' average point score in GCE A/VCE/AS subjects are well below the national average. The authority has identified this and now has strategic agreements in place between schools, the college and the local LSC to address these issues.

## SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved partnerships between the council and health services</li> <li>targeted effort to improve health needs of children looked after, but with scope to improve further</li> <li>clearer priorities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reducing teenage pregnancy rates</li> <li>extending CAMHS</li> <li>health of children with disabilities</li> <li>substance misuse</li> <li>attention to the wider health agenda, e.g. alcohol and obesity.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved strategies and planning</li> <li>better fostering services</li> <li>improving performance indicators</li> <li>more effectively managed child protection register</li> <li>all child protection cases reviewed.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further improvements in performance, now from a more stable base</li> <li>address early years registration weaknesses as identified in Ofsted inspections</li> <li>impact of quality assurance</li> <li>speed and quality of assessments and reviews</li> <li>numbers of children looked after and out of borough placements</li> <li>level and timing of adoptions.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved attainment</li> <li>better support for early years</li> <li>very effective support for school improvement</li> <li>reduction in the rate of unauthorised secondary absence and improved attendance of children looked after</li> <li>use of performance data.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further improvement in the attainment of <i>all</i> pupils across all key stages, particularly looked after children</li> <li>attendance at primary level</li> <li>quality of work at the Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consultation with young people</li> <li>• lower than average levels of re-offending</li> <li>• fewer looked after children warned or convicted</li> <li>• high number of young people contribute to reviews</li> <li>• partnership with the police in truancy sweeps.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transition arrangements for children with disabilities and those with ongoing mental health needs</li> <li>• transition arrangements for looked after children living out of the borough, with a special focus on personal education plans.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective collaboration with colleges in delivering post-16 education and training</li> <li>• significant improvement in the proportion of young people progressing to full time education or training to above national average.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of school places for children aged 14-16</li> <li>• achievement of children looked after</li> <li>• outcomes for young people post-16.</li> </ul>

## Service management

The council's self-assessment demonstrates improving levels of partnership working, and the better relationships with health services are encouraging. There is generally good awareness of areas for improvement, but developmental plans are not based securely enough on performance information. Future self-assessment could usefully set out more focused improvement targets. The council is using increasingly sophisticated approaches to assessing children's needs in the context of developing its consultative processes.

Good progress is being made in moving towards the integrated children's services. The recent appointment of the Executive Director of Children's Services (the Director of Education) and the departmental reconfigurations mark significant steps forward in the process.

The authority's education services are very well managed. Members and officers have very high ambitions for the young people in the borough. The self assessment report shows that they know the strengths and weaknesses of the education provision well. They plan effectively and monitor the outcomes for young people carefully and comprehensively. They provide effective and well targeted support to schools. Their work has borne substantial fruit, with sustained improvements in the overwhelming majority of outcomes.

Funding level indicators for children's social care generally reflect the council's commitment to achieve improvement, but there remains a gap of 24% between spending on children's services and flexible spending shares. In particular resources

directed on family support services appear low, but spending on children in need has shown a significant rise to average figures. In social care recruitment and retention remain a challenge, but there are signs that this is being tackled with improving success. In 2004/05 there was a particularly high vacancy level in social care at 27%, but the move to a functional organisational structure appears to have made delivery of services more secure despite this.

Overall, capacity to improve within children's social care is good, demonstrated by some improved outcomes in the last year and responses to inspection findings. In education there has been a good track record of improvement over the last three years and capacity to improve is excellent. It would appear that the strong team of senior officers are well placed to tackle remaining aspects of low performance. Current uncertainty about the future of the Chief Executive is not judged to be a risk factor to the children's services agenda. The council has excellent capacity to improve overall.

## **Areas for exploration in the joint area review**

### **Being healthy**

*Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people:*

- improvements to the wider children's health agenda.

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

- improvements to children's mental health services.

### **Staying safe**

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

- the speed and quality of assessments and interventions.

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

- improved understanding of child protection thresholds across other organisations.



## Enjoying and achieving

*Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:*

- standards of attainment and achievement are raised for all pupils across all key stages, with a focus on reducing differences between children looked after and their peers
- improved attendance in primary schools.

## Making a positive contribution

*Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives:*

- transition arrangements for vulnerable children and young people are improved.

## 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:*

- post-16 attainment in sixth forms is improved.

## 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: London Borough of Lambeth Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements <sup>1</sup>
The contribution of <b><i>the local authority's social care services</i></b> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	<b>2</b>
The contribution of <b><i>local authority's education services</i></b> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The contribution of <b><i>the local authority's children's services</i></b> 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>4</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