

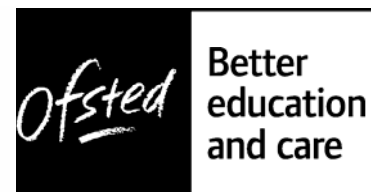
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Making Social Care  
Better for People



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**1 December 2005**

Dear Mr Allen

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF KNOWSLEY METROPOLITAN  
BOROUGH COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE  
SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on the 27 June 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 good, particularly in the way that healthy lifestyles are promoted through partnership between key services and the high level of integration between social services and health which have resulted in the awarding of Beacon Status. The incidence of teenage pregnancy has declined significantly since 1998 and is now well below the national average. The proportion of schools participating in the National Healthy Schools Standards is high when compared to the national average. The health needs of looked after children are met effectively and indicators exceed national averages.

The actions taken to promote the mental health of children and young people are effective. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) team is well integrated in terms of service delivery. The council has continued to invest in the CAMHS team with the addition of specific posts in relation to particular vulnerable groups of children and has utilised a skill-mixing approach to support multi-disciplinary delivery. The CAMHS team is particularly effective in undertaking timely assessments. However, the authority has identified the area of transition from CAMHS team to adult services as not being 'sufficiently robust'.

## **Staying safe**

Outcomes in this area are very good and demonstrate sustained and continuing improvement by the council. Children and young people are provided with the safe environment to which they are entitled. The authority's policies show good recognition of what constitutes a safe environment and their implementation is monitored consistently and rigorously.

There has been a slight increase in the numbers on the child protection register over the last year and this figure remains higher than that of similar authorities. There was a rise in the percentage of child protection re-registrations but this is largely accounted for by one large sibling group. All cases on the child protection register continue to be reviewed within timescale. The authority has clear referral systems, families and children at risk are identified early within the context of strong Children In Need procedures and the quality of preventative support is good. This has led to lower levels of initial referrals followed by high rates of assessments. These are undertaken in a very timely fashion and include multi-disciplinary core assessments, and performance exceeds national and comparator averages. The authority has reported that there has been a shortage of foster carers; however, despite this, performance has been maintained or improved in virtually all indicators. Placement stability is good and the use of residential placements is falling. There has been a significant increase in the percentage of looked after children living with their parents. Whilst this is considered a positive outcome, the current figures are high and the authority recognises the need to ensure the appropriate rescinding of care orders and has assessed all children and young people in this situation. There has also been a sustained performance in the support for looked after children, all of whom now have had an assigned social worker since 2001/02. Protocols have been established between education and social services and health in supporting looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a clear process within the council for collating, monitoring and reviewing information from Criminal Records Bureau checks. Responses to Serious Case reviews are monitored regularly by senior managers and elected members.

Health and social care already benefit from an extremely high level of integration and this can be demonstrated by excellent performance across a range of indicators where multi-disciplinary working is required.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes in this area are good. A general pattern of improvement emerges from a study of the data and relevant reports and indicates that strategies are having some and often a significant impact on improving outcomes. There are clear and appropriate strategies in place to raise standards of education and training with strong leadership provided by the local authority to promote an ambitious culture of improvement. The

overall quality of early years provision is good and supports children in enabling them to meet the early learning goals. Significant improvements have been made to performance at Key Stages 2 and 4, and post-16 provision. Achievements at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics are below national averages, with declining achievement in all three areas. This was particularly so in 2003/04 where it was marginally below the average for similar authorities. Achievements at Key Stage 2 are good. English is marginally below the national average with mathematics and science above. All are significantly above statistical neighbour performance with sustained year-on-year improvement. There was a significant rise in achievement in English and mathematics in 2003/04. Key Stage 3 is below national averages in English, mathematics and science, however, in both English and mathematics, there has been year-on-year improvement from 1999 to 2004. Achievement for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A\* to C is significantly below the national average and marginally below that of statistical neighbours. However, there has been a year-on-year improvement in results from 25% in 2000 to 38% in 2004. The local authority achieved just over its floor target of 38% in 2004. Achievement at GCSE grades A\* to G remains below both the national and statistical neighbour averages. There was a marked decline in 2003 with an improvement in 2004 to return to the level of previous years. However, a significant number of young people acquire National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and follow alternative vocational routes within the 14 to 19 collegiate.

Overall provision for the 14 to 16 cohort is appropriate and comprehensive, and addresses the needs of most vulnerable learners. Secondary attendance has improved from a low base but is still well below national averages. However, there are robust strategies to address attendance issues both in primary and secondary schools and evidence of improvement. Needs analysis, strategic planning, partnerships and collaboration and evaluating the effectiveness of actions are excellent.

The proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSEs is slightly lower than the national average and similar authorities although is considered acceptable. There has been a significant improvement in relation to the poor attendance levels of looked after children over the past year. However, the authority demonstrated very good performance with 100% of children who are looked after participating in their reviews.

Provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Annual target-setting meetings are held within all special and mainstream settings to discuss pupils' tracking and progress. The school improvement team monitors targets. The annual self-assessment process is embedded and contributes to a year-on-year improvement. Monitoring of the use of resources is comprehensive.

The Knowsley Children and Young Persons Plan (CYPP) was formulated following significant consultation with children, young people, very young children, parents and

other stakeholders and preceded the Department for Education and Skill's (DfES) guidance in respect of the requirement of a CYPP. It is noteworthy that the Knowsley CYPP is considered an exemplar of good practice by the DfES.

### **Making a positive contribution**

Outcomes in this area are considered good overall although there are some areas of weakness. The rate of youth crime overall has increased between October 2003 and June 2004, in line with the national average, although from July 2004 to September 2004, the rate was higher than the national average. Rates of re-offending are higher than national averages. The authority is currently reorganising the Youth Offending Service (YOS) in order to encompass the preventative agenda in terms of first time offenders and re-offenders more effectively and this will require ongoing evaluation of its success.

The authority has reported very high levels of looked after children who contributed their opinions at reviews. The authority also reports that 100% of reviews of looked after children have been completed within statutory timescales. The local authority has put strategies in place to help children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and looked after children to manage the transition between specific phases in their lives. There is evidence as to the effectiveness of the transition services, which is very positive across a range of performance indicators. The authority has established a number of forums to elicit the views of children, young people and very young children. The CYPP includes locally agreed priorities which are tailored across the borough to meet the identified needs. Consultation with children and young people is well developed in Knowsley and clearly influences the policy decisions made by the authority. Positive consultation with children and young people was a feature of the recent award of Beacon Status in respect of the integrated children's service.

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

Outcomes in this area are good overall. There are highly effective strategies for raising the standards of education and training and for broadening opportunities for young people aged 14 to 19 throughout the borough. This is enhanced by collaborative partnership between the local authority, local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), schools, the community college and other providers. Such partnership enables apposite arrangements for ensuring quality and an excellent and appropriate curriculum offer. The legacy of attainment at GCSE remains well below national averages despite very good improvements in results each year. The local authority will need to continue to address issues of achievement in school sixth forms.

There has been a dramatic and significant increase in the percentage of care leavers in employment, training and education in the past year. This means that the authority has

achieved a much better outcome for looked after children in terms of employment, training or education than their counterparts have achieved in the community.

There are 10 children and young people or their carers who are receiving direct payments and, whilst this is considered acceptable in terms of performance of similar authorities, this area could be developed further.

## SUMMARY

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for improvement</b>
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and young people</li> <li>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services</li> <li>the health of looked after children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>transition from CAMHS to adult services.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing children and young people with a safe environment</li> <li>child protection procedures</li> <li>support for looked after children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased local provision of foster carers</li> <li>child protection re-registrations.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strong leadership by local authority to promote a culture of continued improvement</li> <li>attainment at Key Stage 2</li> <li>continued year-on-year improvement at Key Stage 4</li> <li>attendance rates of looked after children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attainment at Key Stages 1, 3 and 4</li> <li>attendance at both primary and secondary level</li> <li>value added from Key Stages 2 to 4</li> <li>attainment of looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>looked after children contributing to reviews.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increasing reoffending rates</li> <li>lack of reduction in youth crime over last 12 months.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>highly effective partnerships</li> <li>effective quality assurance arrangements</li> <li>good curriculum offer for post-16 learners</li> <li>care leavers in entry to employment.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>achievement at GCSE</li> <li>school sixth form provision</li> <li>direct payments take up.</li> </ul>

## **Service management**

The authority benefits from an extremely high level of integration in terms of health and social care. This is supported by further joint working across the authority and with partner agencies including the voluntary and private sector. The authority has utilised Health Act Flexibilities in all service areas, which again reflects the high level of integration. The authority, with its partners, has achieved Beacon Status in recognition of its achievement in the development of an integrated Children's Service. It is noted that the authority has not chosen to introduce a completely new structure to deliver its Children's Services but has chosen to build on its existing structures of integrated health and social care provision.

The authority has collaborated closely with relevant partners and consulted widely with parents, carers, children and young people, and very young children in analysing needs and setting appropriate, challenging targets for improvement as contained within the Children and Young People's Plan. The CYPP is being utilised as an exemplar of good practice by the DfES and is well ahead in terms of meeting the requirements of the Children's Act.

The CYPP identifies nine key priorities, which were formerly known as the 'Knowsley Nine'. The outcomes are clearly stated, and are currently due for analysis, as noted in the CYPP 2004/05. It is possible to judge impact in terms of outcomes, which are linked to performance indicators, and this appears to be very positive. However, it is more difficult to establish the extent to which strategies and policies provide value for money.

Inspectors judged the council's capacity to improve its services as excellent. This judgement was based upon the council's track record of improving outcomes for children and young people, its positive response to the every child matters agenda, the extent of current joint working and the clarity of its strategic planning and vision.

It was disappointing to note that the quality of the self-assessment was poor in a number of areas. It was difficult to identify any weaknesses from the self-assessment and subsequent action plans to address those weaknesses. There was insufficient attention given to outcomes throughout the document. Inspectors anticipate that the authority will improve the quality of the self-assessment next year.

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

### **Staying safe**

*Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:*

- consideration of low levels of referrals and the impact of preventative services.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

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

- continued improvements at Key Stages 1, 3 and 4
- continued and sustainable improvement to rates of attendance.

## **Making a positive contribution**

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

- the range of activities and support to assist children and young people in leading law abiding and constructive lives
- the quality and range of youth service provision.

## **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: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough 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>4</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>4</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