

9 December 2010

Mrs Alison O'Sullivan
Director of Children and Young People
Kirklees Metropolitan Council
Oldgate House, 2 Oldgate
Huddersfield HD1 6QW

Dear Mrs O'Sullivan

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

Kirklees Metropolitan Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Kirklees Metropolitan Council perform well.

The large majority of types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. Nursery and primary schools show good performance and pupil referral units are good, as are most special schools. Secondary schools are not doing quite as well, although outcomes are better than at the same point last year and no school is inadequate. Sixth form colleges and school sixth forms are mostly good. The local fostering and adoption agencies are good and all local children's homes for those in care are at least good. However, childcare provision and the local further education college are not as strong.

The joint area review of October 2007 found that services for both safeguarding and looked after children were good. An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services in October 2009 found a number of strengths and no areas for priority action.

National performance measures show the very large majority of outcomes are in line with or above the averages for England or for similar areas. Results are also in line for 11-year-olds and 16-year-olds, as is the trend of improvement. However, the number of primary schools not reaching the expected standards more than doubled in 2009. Pupils from a number of minority ethnic groups do not achieve as well as all pupils at the age of both 11 and 16. The gaps in achievement between young people with special educational needs and young people from low-income families and all pupils at the age of 16 have widened over time. Nineteen-year-olds in Kirklees, including those from low-income families, gain around the same number of qualifications as their peers elsewhere but results are not improving as fast as those in similar areas, particularly in gaining five good GCSEs or equivalent qualifications.

Key areas for further development

- Reduce the number of primary schools that are not meeting the expected standards.
- Increase the number of young people, including those from low-income families, who gain qualifications at the age of 19.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are almost always successful. Almost every service and setting is good at this. Fewer children are now too overweight at the ages of five and 11, and the number of children taking part in physical education and sport has increased in line with

participation nationally over time. However, the number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is not falling fast enough. Recording the number of mothers still breast-feeding their babies after six weeks does not appear very well established in the local area. Too many 16-year-olds report that they have recently been drunk or taken drugs.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are almost always good. Ofsted's inspections of services and settings confirm this, although some childminders are not quite as good. Good local services communicate and work well together to protect children at risk of harm, and use a common approach for assessing and meeting their needs. The unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found there had been effective implementation of the recommendations from serious case reviews. It also noted particularly good arrangements to respond to domestic abuse. However there were several development points, including improving the quality of initial and full assessments. Recent data show a decline in performance for a number of social care indicators. There is a weakness in the arrangements for ensuring that children are safe within the community shown by the increasing numbers of children who are killed or seriously injured on the roads. Safeguarding arrangements in the local authority's five children's homes are good.

Primary schools, sixth form colleges, special schools and pupil referral units are usually good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. This is also the case in the local fostering and adoption agencies and in both local authority and private and voluntary children's homes. Monitoring visits to the further education college show that reasonable progress is being made in improving outcomes. Results in national tests for children at the end of their Reception year in school are similar to those of children elsewhere. Although the trend has been variable, over time outcomes have improved faster than in similar areas. Pupils achieve as well as those in similar local areas in national tests at ages 11 and 16. The local authority has had some success in improving outcomes for pupils from some minority ethnic groups at the age of 16. Standards of behaviour in secondary schools are similar to those found elsewhere. The number of secondary school pupils who are often absent from school is around the national average but is not improving as fast as in similar local authorities.

Good arrangements for involving children and young people in planning and reviewing local services are in place. Consultation with the Youth Council and Children in Care Council has been particularly influential in drawing up the local area's priorities. Almost all services and other settings are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities, although this is not promoted as strongly by some childminders. Rates of re-offending by young people in Kirklees are better than those in similar areas, and by most measures the youth offending service works well. In the last year, and over time, the number of young people offending for the first time has reduced well. However, the number of young people who receive a custodial sentence has risen and is not as good as in similar areas. The availability of suitable housing for young offenders has significantly improved and is comparable to similar areas.

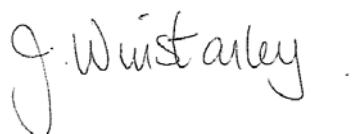
Pupil referral units, special schools and sixth form colleges are particularly successful in preparing young people for life after school. The local authority knows that not all young people do as well as they can at the age of 19 and is committed to bringing about further improvement. Most recent available data show that the number of 17-year-olds in school, college or other form of training has gone down. Although in line with similar areas, too many 16- to 18-year-olds are not in education, work or training and local targets have not been met. However, recent data show the number of care leavers in education, work or training have risen.

Prospects for improvement

The review of the Children and Young People's Plan by the local authority and its partners demonstrates good progress in some important areas; it is also clear about what still needs to be done. The local authority has a strong focus on continued improvement. It plans to improve performance in schools and is developing a 'Narrowing the Gap Strategy' to address inequalities in outcomes for children and young people whose circumstances makes them vulnerable, including those from minority ethnic groups. Although the number of primary schools below the expected standards has increased, only one school has been judged inadequate and provisional data for 2010 show good improvement in test results for 11-year-olds. The inspection of front-line child protection services found staff reported there was good induction and supervision and that they had received high quality training.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment