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17 December 2008

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

Dear Mrs O'Sullivan

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Kirklees Metropolitan Council 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.

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.



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 | 2 |
| Making a positive contribution | 3 |
| 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

Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council’s contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people is good. It delivers services that are consistently above the minimum requirements for users. The council has responded rigorously to the outcomes of the APA and JAR that took place in 2007 and can demonstrate improvements against most areas for development. Progress has been sustained and is improving outcomes in all five aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda. The council has maintained its good service performance in ensuring that children and young people are healthy, stay safe, make a positive contribution and are prepared for their future economic well-being. Although improvement in outcomes is being made in respect of enjoying and achieving it remains adequate. The achievement of some groups of learners including those from ethnic minority groups is still too variable and despite the standards attained by looked after children rising they are below the national average. Also the council recognises that fixed-term exclusions of children from primary schools is too high. The management of services remains good and the council’s capacity to improve is good and strengthening. Priorities for action are clearly set and resources have been used well to shift patterns of service delivery and to enhance preventative ways of working. The self-assessment provides an accurate evaluation of current performance and identifies well, the priority areas for further improvement. The council is working hard to engage service users in planning and to respond to diverse local community needs.

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.

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| <p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good action to promote the health of looked after children. Some 93% have health assessment and dental checks compared to 82% in similar areas. ▪ Good action to reduce substance misuse leading to improved levels of identification and treatment. The number benefiting from these services has risen impressively in recent years and now exceeds the regional average. ▪ Continued good progress in the role played by schools in promoting healthy lifestyles recognised through the achievement of both Healthy Schools and Healthy College status. ▪ Breast-feeding rates have increased dramatically in the past year and are now in line with similar council areas. |
| <p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rate of teenage conceptions is slightly below similar areas but the recent decline in numbers has stalled. ▪ The provision of health assessments for children and young people with |

learning difficulties and/or disabilities is variable leading to long waiting times in some 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

- The majority of indicators show good, improved and/or sustained performance. The shift in the pattern of referrals, re-referrals and initial assessments shows good impact of services to pro-actively respond to children in need at earlier stages.
- Safeguarding arrangements for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are robust and suitably focused.
- Good Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures are in place. The board has a clear business plan and is effective.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Over a quarter of core assessments do not occur within timescales.
- Many reviews for looked after children are conducted in time but 10% are not. This performance is not as good as in similar council areas.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. This is in line with the council's self-assessment. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- Improvement in children's development in the Early Years Foundation Stage is above the national average.
- Education standards are rising overall and are broadly in line with statistical neighbours; the gap is closing between Kirklees and similar councils in the achievement of young people at Key Stage 4 in relation to the proportion who gain five good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics.
- Well targeted support to secure improvement has reduced the number of schools causing concern. A coordinated approach to school improvement means that a higher proportion of schools is now being judged as good or better by Ofsted than in previous years.

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| <p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The achievement of different groups of learners remains variable and trends of improvement particularly at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 are inconsistent. ▪ Standards attained by looked after children are below those of similar councils and the national average. This was identified in the council's self assessment. ▪ High proportion of fixed-term exclusions from primary schools. |
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Making a positive contribution

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.

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| <p>Major strengths</p> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School inspection reports indicate that children and young people are enabled to contribute positively to their schools and communities. ▪ The proportion of young people offending for the first time has fallen well in the last year and is now below the figure for similar areas. ▪ Rates of re-offending have improved and are now in line with similar areas. ▪ Children are generally consulted on issues affecting their lives leading to good examples of where this has made a discernable difference. |
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| <p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rate of participation of looked after children in their own reviews has improved and includes processes that exist to consult with them outside the formal review process. Nevertheless, the actual level of participation in reviews remains below comparator areas and the England average. |
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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.

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| <p>Major strengths</p> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An effective 14–19 strategy has been established based on good collaboration between partners including good employer links and work-based learning opportunities. Children and young people are well informed about their options at key transition points. ▪ Performance of young people in sixth form colleges in the area remains above that of similar councils and the national average. |
|---|

- The proportion of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications has improved well since 2005.
- The proportion of looked after children and care leavers who are in education, employment or training is consistently high and a high proportion have pathway plans to support their future economic well-being.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Although numbers are falling, the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training is above that of statistical neighbours.
- Post-16 provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is less well developed than for other groups of young people.

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. The council has sustained and improved outcomes for children and young people. Its capacity to improve further is underpinned by effective leadership and high levels of commitment to meeting the diverse range of needs of the different communities within the local area. Self-evaluation is rigorous and identifies precisely, the strengths and weaknesses in provision of children’s services. The Children and Young People’s Plan sets out a clear agenda for future improvement informed by the views of a wide range of stakeholders including those who are more vulnerable. Well established and effective partnership working means that services are able to identify and prioritise actions required to improve the life chances of all young people. The council has given high priority to preventative approaches and this is now reflected in the wide range of services aimed at early forms of support for children and families. The council has responded positively to inspection and has effective systems for performance management. Appropriate targets are set within the Local Area Agreement and are based on effective needs analysis.

Major strengths

- Partnership working is good and the delivery of services is well targeted and suitably prioritised.
- Resources have been used well to facilitate early forms of help and support, particularly to the most vulnerable children and young people. This is showing good impact.
- Ambition for children is manifested in good leadership and clarity in service planning and delivery.

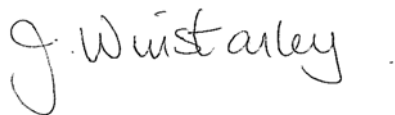
Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Some hard to shift key indicators such as teenage conception and the number of young people not in education, employment or training remain areas for further improvement.

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 "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection