

9 December 2010

Ms Judith Harwood
Acting Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services
Kingston-upon-Hull City Council
The Guildhall
Alfred Gelder Street
Kingston-upon-Hull HU1 2AA

Dear Ms Harwood

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.

Kingston-upon-Hull City Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
--------------------------------	-------------------------

Children's services in Kingston-upon-Hull City Council perform adequately.

The majority of types of services and settings inspected by Ofsted are good or better. This is true for all post-16 provision and the pupil referral units. Much of the nursery and non-domestic childcare provision is good or better and the pupil referral units and most special schools are at least good. Around two-thirds of primary schools are good. Half of childminders are satisfactory and secondary schools are not doing as well, with a quarter judged inadequate. The local fostering and adoption agencies are satisfactory but four of the local authority's seven children's homes for those in care are only satisfactory and this is not as good as in 2009.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services in October 2010 found some strengths and no areas for priority action.

National performance measures show a very large majority of outcomes are in line with the averages for England or for similar areas, although outcomes for economic well-being and enjoying and achieving are not as strong. Results in national tests are low but in line with similar areas for 11-year-olds. Between 2005 and 2009 they improved faster than results elsewhere. Despite a particularly good improvement in 2009, young people at the age of 16 achieve very low results when compared to similar areas. Behaviour is still not good enough in too many secondary schools. Results at the age of 19 are also low, although 19-year-olds from low-income families achieve comparable results to similar areas in gaining five good GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. At all ages, with the exception of young people aged 16, the gaps in achievement for groups whose circumstances have made them vulnerable have narrowed over time.

Key areas for further development

- Improve secondary schools, so that more are good or better and behaviour improves.
- Raise attainment for children and young people of all ages.
- Improve the number of children's homes that are good or better.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are reasonably successful. Primary schools, sixth form colleges, special schools and pupil referral units are particularly good at this. However, secondary schools and the local authority fostering agency do not do as well. There have been some good improvements in the arrangements to keep young people healthy, many of which

have been priority areas for the local area. Good services are available to support children and young people who have emotional or mental health difficulties. More children are taking part in physical education and sport with a good trend of improvement and more children are pleased with the quality of local parks than last year. Other improvements are the good rate of reduction in young women under-18 who become pregnant and the good reduction in the number of young people who say they have been drunk or taken drugs recently. There is also a high rate of screening for chlamydia. The number of children who are too overweight at the ages of five and 11 showed a better rate of reduction in 2009. There is good local knowledge of how many mothers are still breast-feeding after six weeks and an increasing number of mothers are doing so. This number is in line with the national average, although comparatively low. Parents are less satisfied with services for disabled children than parents elsewhere.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are good in many services and settings. Ofsted's inspections show that primary and special schools, pupil referral units and sixth form colleges are particularly good at this. Childminders, secondary schools, children's homes and the local authority's fostering and adoption agencies do not show such strong performance. The unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found good multi-agency intervention with families affected by domestic abuse and that the involvement of children and their families in assessments was a notable strength. It also found that, although there was evidence of good quality assessments, and social workers reported they had good quality and regular supervision, there were inconsistencies in both these aspects of practice. Despite recent good reductions, more children are admitted to hospital because of accidental or deliberate injury than nationally.

Almost all types of services and settings are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning but this is not the case in most secondary schools. However, the number of schools meeting the expected standards in national tests has continued to rise. Standards are not yet high enough at the end of the Reception Year. The number of primary schools not reaching the expected standards showed no reduction in 2009 and, despite improvements, attainment remains low at the age of 11, with provisional data for 2010 showing that progress has stalled. The recent good improvement in national test results is encouraging but, by the age of 16, only just over a third of young people gain five or more good GCSEs. The good, increasing trend in the number of pupils who take two science GCSEs has continued. The local authority reports continued good improvement in examination results at the age of 16 in 2010. The number of secondary pupils who are often absent from school is higher than in similar areas but continues to show good improvement from a low base. Some of this improvement appears to be linked to targeted early-intervention work.

Successful arrangements for involving children and young people in planning and reviewing local services have been in place for some time and include the Young People's Parliament, opportunities for children and young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, and the use of young advisors in a national research project on exclusion. There are mixed results from inspection in

how good services and settings in the City are at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities. Sixth form colleges, pupil referral units, primary schools and the local fostering agency do particularly well, but performance is not as strong in secondary schools, half of the local authority's children's homes and the local authority's adoption agency. By most measures the youth offending service works reasonably well. Re-offending by young people in the city is worse than in similar areas, although the numbers who are caught committing an offence for the first time have improved significantly. Improvements are also seen in the reduction in the numbers who receive a custodial sentence, the number of young offenders who are in education, training or work and their access to suitable housing.

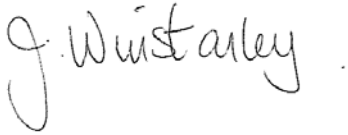
Inspections show there is more work to do in some services and settings to promote the economic well-being of children, with childminders, secondary schools and children's homes not doing very well. However, there is good work by the sixth form colleges, special schools, pupil referral units and the local fostering agency. The local authority knows that not all young people do as well as they can at the age of 19, particularly in gaining two A levels or equivalent qualifications, and that improving young people's learning and skills to prepare them for adult life is a key priority. The number of young people aged 17 who are in education or are being trained has continued to rise steadily. Although still fairly high, in recent years there has been a steady fall in the number of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, work or training and the number is in line with similar areas. Recent data show good improvement in the numbers of care leavers in education, work or training and in the number who are given a suitable place to live when they leave care.

Prospects for improvement

Kingston-upon-Hull won the Local Government Chronicle award for being the most improved local authority of the year in 2010 and the local strategic partnership was also recognised for its work to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, work or training through the Cat.Zero project. The local authority and its partners are clear about what needs to improve in Hull and have been successful in some key priority areas. Clear improvements in a number of outcomes show good work with health partners. The recent inspection of front-line child protection services found high quality training for staff undertaking child protection investigations, resulting in a strong working relationship with the police. However, it also noted some pressures on front-line services because of the unprecedented increase in the number of referrals. Ofsted's monitoring visits to weaker schools show that the local authority is doing very good work to help them get better. However, the local authority is also aware that more still needs to be done, for example to improve the quality of secondary schools, including behaviour, and to ensure more children's homes make good provision for children in the care of the local authority.

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' and a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment