

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0161 618 8207
Direct F 0161 618 8514
North_APA@ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr Nigel Richardson
Director for Children and Young People's Services
Kingston upon Hull City Council
The Guildhall
Alfred Gelder Street
Kingston upon Hull
HU1 2AA

Dear Mr Richardson

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FOR KINGSTON UPON HULL CITY COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), your action plan arising from the joint area review (JAR) and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. The letter comments on progress since the recent JAR. 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.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

Kingston upon Hull consistently delivers above minimum requirements. The council has responded positively to the recommendations raised in the JAR report and has made good progress since that time. The contribution the council makes towards improving outcomes for being healthy, enjoying and achieving, staying safe and making a positive contribution remain good; the council's contribution to improving outcomes with regard to achieving economic well-being remains adequate, although there is clear evidence that the council's approach to partnership and collaborative working is beginning to have a positive effect in this area. Overall, the council has taken significant steps to develop and improve integrated working within children's services. It is responsive to external advice and is proactive in commissioning reports that lead to further improvements. The recent extensive flooding in the city further strengthened the working partnership, successfully ensuring children and young people were well supported and continued to achieve. The council's capacity to improve is good.

Being healthy

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This corresponds to the grade awarded in the JAR published in February 2007. Three recommendations emerged from the JAR.

For action in the next six months

- Ensure prompt access to specialist mental health services for children and young people.
- Improve the transition of children and young people from paediatric to adult health care services.

For action in the longer term

- Ensure short break care for disabled children effectively promotes independence.

A single primary care trust now delivers services to children and young people in Hull. Council leadership is strong and partnership working with the Primary Care Trust has produced clear priorities and ambitions for children and young people. Access to mental health services for children and young people is steadily improving and good progress towards a comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service has been made. Immunisation rates are continuing to improve and are now in line or above national averages. Health surveillance is good with all children being offered appropriate services either through local GPs (93%) or local child health clinics run by community paediatricians (7%). Emergency admissions to hospitals remain above the national average. Active steps are being taken to promote children's health through the Healthy Schools Programme, with 93% of all schools participating, compared to 91% nationally.

The number of teenage conceptions remains comparatively high but the overall rate of reduction from the 1998 base is significantly better than the national average. A similar pattern exists in respect of substance misuse where rates remain higher than average but the underlying trend is down. This service has been redesigned with the significant engagement of young people in the process and is having good impact. Effective action is being taken to strengthen arrangements for the transition of young people from paediatric to adult health care services.

Health assessments and support of looked after children and care leavers are good at 80%. The level of health care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory and steps are being taken to increase respite care capacity and to ensure independence is promoted.

Staying safe

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This corresponds to the grade awarded in the JAR published in February 2007. Two recommendations emerged from the JAR.

For immediate action

- Ensure thresholds for children in need, child protection and entry to the looked after system are used consistently.

For action over the next six months

- Ensure all residential homes for looked after children meet the required national standards in full.

The council has responded effectively to the JAR recommendations. The number of children on the child protection register is decreasing as de-registration rates have increased and greater control has been exercised in respect of children entering the child protection system. Referral rates remain comparatively high at 865 per 10,000 compared to 547 for similar councils. However, this is a result of the development of early preventative and family support services with the intention of reducing longer term cases and child protection registrations. Good progress has been made in implementing the Common Assessment Framework and the council and partners are now able to offer a wider and more effective range of services at earlier stages without compromising the safety of children and young people. As a result re-referral rates are low at 14.2% compared to 22.8% for similar councils.

The percentage of section 47 child protection enquiries completed within 15 days is below the national average but this relates to a small number of cases. The number of initial child protection conferences is also low but this is a direct result of early intervention and support provided to lower level cases rather than registration at later stage. Good work is being undertaken to help families including the effective use of family group conferences. All child protection and looked after children cases are suitably allocated and all child protection cases were reviewed.

The level of domestic violence remains high in Kingston upon Hull but there is effective joint working to raise awareness to ensure action is promptly taken to identify victims and to provide help and support. The Local Children's Safeguarding Board is operating successfully and providing a strong lead for the area, in respect of wider safeguarding activities.

The number of looked after children and young people by the council is comparatively high at 93 per 10,000 population but the trend is reducing. The number of looked after children in residential care remains comparatively low at 11% with a higher proportion than the national average placed in fostered care by relatives or friends. Children who become looked after have comparatively good

placement stability and outcomes in respect of health and education are also good. Effective work is being undertaken to ensure that all residential homes for looked after children meet the required national standards in full. The CYPP review sets out a clear strategy and action for monitoring and maintaining national standards.

Adoption of looked after children within 12 months of decision is good at 90% and higher than similar councils and nationally at 83% and 77% respectively. A high proportion of children are in foster care and the number placed out of area has significantly reduced. Reviews of care arrangements for looked after children are good at 97%.

No actions were raised for childminders at inspection relating to child protection. A reflection of the good support and guidance provided by the council.

Between September 2005 and July 2007, 74% of schools were judged good or better in enabling children and young people to adopt safe practices. The number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents continues to reduce, as compared to the national average. A targeted and suitably resourced programme, in conjunction with Barnardos, is in place to monitor and support children and young people whose whereabouts is unknown.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This corresponds to the grade awarded in the JAR published in February 2007. Three recommendations emerged from the JAR.

For immediate action

- Reduce the high levels of pupil absence in secondary and special schools.

For action in the next six months

- Ensure the challenge and support to primary schools focuses sufficiently on improving the attainment of pupils aged seven.

For action in the longer term

- Ensure the provision for secondary age pupils enables more to achieve good GCSEs or equivalent in English and mathematics.

The council has provided considerable direction to schools and other partners in helping to improve school attendance. Despite rates of attendance being below the national average, the rate of improvement between 2002 and 2006 is better than the national average in both primary and secondary schools. In the secondary phase, 12 out of 14 schools have reduced absence rates, some significantly. Kingston upon Hull was one of 17 local authorities to reduce absence in 2006 and seven out of nine

priority schools contributed to this improvement. Through targeted support and regular network meetings, absence rates for some of the children and young people with the lowest attendance in the city declined. The council is working with National Strategies as part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families Persistent Absence project and there is recognition of the improvements made by individual target schools.

The council has developed a number of innovative projects to further improve attainment particularly at Key Stage 2. The rate of improvement at the end of Key Stage 2 is now higher than the national average in both English and mathematics and standards have reached those of its statistical neighbours. The council has continued to reduce the number of schools where children and young people's performance is below floor targets. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 remains the focus of intensive support being offered through the Intensifying Support Programme and the Primary Leadership Programme.

Overall, attainment at Key Stage 4 is below the national average but the rate of improvement in recent years has been impressive. Significantly the percentage of young people gaining five A*-C GCSE grades placed the local authority in the top quartile for improvements between 2004 and 2006. There are presently no secondary schools where children and young people perform below floor targets. The proportion of young people gaining one A*-G grade at GCSE has also improved since 2004 and reached 93.75% in 2006. This figure is, however, still well below statistical neighbours and the national average. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2007 indicate a further increase in the number of young people achieving good GCSE grades in English and mathematics. The achievement of looked after children has significantly improved and the proportion achieving five A*-C grades is above the national average at 21.2%.

School inspections reveal that progress made by children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory or better in all primary schools and in 75% of secondary schools. Between September 2005 and July 2007, two secondary schools were given a notice to improve and one placed in special measures. Special measures monitoring visits to date indicate satisfactory progress.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This corresponds to the grade awarded in the JAR published in February 2007. Two areas emerged from the JAR.

For immediate action

- Ensure a consistent city-wide approach to preventing anti-social behaviour and youth offending.

For action in the next six months

- Identify all young carers and ensure that those who wish to can access relevant services.

Good progress is being made to reduce offending and re-offending rates. The underlying rate of offending shows a downward trend from a higher than average baseline and has been falling at a rate of 25% per year. The number of first time offenders has reduced by 8% per year. Partnership working to prevent anti-social behaviour and youth offending is strong and is supported by focused activity within the seven areas across the city. The number of final warnings and convictions of looked after children continue to improve and are now below the national average. The youth offending team and youth service are working well to reduce crime levels and to provide children and young people with positive opportunities. There is good work to assess the needs of children and young people at risk of offending within the common assessment processes to ensure that services provided are well focused.

Arrangements in the city to enable children and young people to participate in the planning and development of services which affect them are good. School councils, consultation events and the Youth Parliament serve to enhance involvement. The council has been active in including vulnerable, and Black and minority ethnic children and young people. There are good examples of how young people have affected change including the provision of services to reduce substance misuse and in the young person's scrutiny panel.

Since the JAR, there has been targeted work to develop services for young carers and their support arrangements. There has also been good work to ensure children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good opportunities to influence services and to contribute fully to life in the city. Planning for transition to adult services is good.

Early years services are becoming more focused on hard-to-reach families and children as part of developing family support provision in localities. There is good work to ensure all young children are ready for school and able to make the most of their early education.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. This corresponds to the grade awarded in the JAR published in February 2007. Five recommendations emerged from the JAR.

For action in the next six months

- Reduce the number of young people whose whereabouts is not known.

For action in the longer term

- Reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment and training.
- Improve provision at Level 1 and below for young people who leave school without qualifications.
- Establish clear progression routes to Levels 2 and 3 courses for all young people, including people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Ensure a sufficient range of education, employment and training for young offenders.

Since the JAR, the number of young people whose destination is not known reduced to 8.5% in the first half of 2007. A partnership approach is in place and is to be expanded following the successful tracking of 30% of young people across the city. The adjusted target of 10.6% by November 2006 has been met and has improved further. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) also continues to reduce. At 13.1% this is still above the national average. The council recognises this as a key priority. A NEET action plan is in place and is regularly monitored in collaboration with key partners including the Learning and Skills Council, the Youth Service and Humber Connexions. The council continues to maximise efforts to identify employee placements and opportunities, particularly at Level 2, for all young people, including young offenders.

The council's 14–19 strategy is based on strong collaborative partnerships, with an executive body (Hull and East Riding) overseeing cross boundary provision. Operational arrangements are delivered through two learner zones, East and West Hull. Good progress has been made in introducing a common application process, which has already been piloted in the Humber region. Specialised diplomas in five areas are to be delivered in 2008–09. An employment and training group has been established to identify and improve provision at Level 1 and below. Present progression routes at Levels 2 and 3 have led to improvements in participation and attainment, albeit still below national average but much closer to those achieved in similar areas. There is an improving trend of attainment at both levels since 2004, which, at Level 2 is better than the national average. National vocational qualification (NVO) success rates for work based learners have been consistently above the national average since 2004, presently 57.8%. The participation of looked after young people in employment, education and training also remains high at 88%, compared to all young people in the area.

Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good, and its management of these services is good. These areas were judged as adequate at the time of the JAR. No recommendations emerged from the JAR.

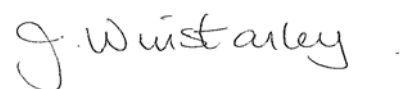
The JAR recognised both the ambition and commitment of the council to improve outcomes for children and young people across the city. There is strong and effective senior leadership, good corporate support and productive partnership arrangements are in place. The council has sought to invest significant funding in the education and care of young people and this reflects the key role it plays in regenerating the city. An integrated, yet personalised approach within each of the seven areas across the city appropriately reflects their difference in terms of social and economic challenge.

The review of the comprehensive and detailed 2006-2008 CYPP shows that the council continues to improve well on the majority of priorities for action, although the pace of improvement could be better in some areas. Priorities set by the council are shared well with partner agencies, parents, children and young people. The Youth Parliament is an example of young people's active involvement. Joint commissioning strategies also ensure that children's services are fully integrated and responsive to need. Performance management, including the focused use of data, is effectively used to support and further develop clear strategies to secure better outcomes. Good progress, for example has recently been made in successfully reviewing the strategic business case for Building Schools for the Future. The council, however, recognises that although better cost control is evident, greater levels of efficiency are still required and that challenges remain in continuing to reduce absence and NEET figures.

Overall, however, the council has demonstrated good progress in meeting the joint area review recommendations, and has shown good capacity to maintain and improve further its services for all children and young people in Hull.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection