

26 November 2007

Mrs Anne Marie Carrie
Executive Director of Family and Children's Services
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Family and Children's Services
Town Hall
Hornton Street
London W8 7NX

Dear Mrs Carrie

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on 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 4

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea consistently delivers outstanding services. The council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations made in the JAR report, published in February 2007, which judged services to be outstanding in 10 of 12 aspects, with economic well-being and the health service for children being judged as good. There has been particularly good progress with commissioning, strengthening services to support the economic well-being of children, young people and families, and joint work with the Primary Care Trust (PCT). At the same time, the council has sustained excellent performance in each of the other *Every child matters* outcomes for children, and in service management. High standards have been maintained and there is a real impact on children and young people with some of the best results nationally. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is in an excellent position to build further on its strengths. The APA confirms the judgements made in the JAR and there are no further areas for development.

Being healthy

Grade 4

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 outstanding. One recommendation emerged from the JAR.

For action in the next six months

- The council and the PCT should develop a formal process to regularly evaluate the impact of the PCT deficit on the development and implementation of joint services for children and young people in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to ensure this does not have an adverse impact on outcomes.

Regular meetings are held between the council and the PCT. The PCT deficit has been turned around and the financial surplus is being invested in further service development. A joint strategy to improve the health of all children and young people in the borough is improving outcomes. Its impact can be seen, for example, in the excellent range of child health provision. Outcomes are outstanding, with excellent performance, for example, on breast-feeding, and the increased number of schools achieving Healthy Schools status. The proportion of mothers initiating breast-feeding remains consistently and significantly higher than national and comparator group levels. A high proportion of young people in the Tellus2 survey indicated that they felt positive about their health and healthy lifestyles. Access to an expanding early speech and language service is making a positive difference to children's language development. Sexual health education and services are readily accessible, resulting in sustained reduction in teenage pregnancy rates which are well below national and comparator levels. Infant and perinatal mortality rates remain comparatively low and are also significantly below national and comparator groups. Immunisation rates are improving despite remaining comparatively low due to high population shifts and under-reporting.

Services and information for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are excellent. These children and their families are involved well in shaping health services. Transitional arrangements for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into primary school and to adult services are effective. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provision is outstanding. For example, it enables prompt access, assessment and treatment for looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Service provision, which has achieved Beacon status, is co-ordinated well and of high quality. Health provision for looked after children is outstanding with, for example, a high take up of health and dental assessment.

Staying safe

Grade 4

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 outstanding. No recommendations emerged from the JAR.

An excellent range of preventative and family support services are in place. Strong inter-agency working is embedded and effective at an operational level. While the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has had an integrated children's electronic recording system since 1999, an improved model was successfully introduced in July 2007. The Local Safeguarding Children Board monitors and develops excellent safeguarding services through its operational sub-groups and ensures good inter-agency practice through its comprehensive training. The Board has recently approved the appointment of an independent chair and has developed a three year business plan.

Thresholds for intervention are low, resulting in high numbers of referrals for children in need, with prompt and timely initial and core assessments being completed. Levels of repeat referrals continue to increase and remain significantly higher than national and comparator group levels. Patterns of repeat referrals are regularly monitored by the Family and Children's Services senior management team and attributed to low thresholds, encouraging partner agencies to make referrals, and to record practices. The number of children on the child protection register remains consistently lower than national and comparable group levels. All children on the register are allocated a qualified social worker. Child protection conferences are promptly held and all reviews take place within set timescales.

Road safety has improved through work in schools and the number of children involved in road accidents has reduced considerably, exceeding the national reduction target. Levels of reported crime are low and have reduced and a good range of initiatives are in place to prevent young people engaging in, or being the victims of, crime. A recently revised domestic violence strategy supports good partnership working across agencies. Robust protocols are in place for missing children, supported by excellent practice between agencies. Families, children and young people are well informed about safety risks in the home and in the community.

Strong systems are in place to safeguard children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, resulting in good outcomes for children and their families. Safeguarding of looked after children is promoted very effectively, with evidence of the impact of strong corporate parenting. All looked after children have qualified social workers and statutory visits are carried out consistently for children placed within and outside the borough. All reviews of looked after children are held within set timescales which are significantly higher than national and comparator groups. A very high proportion of looked after children contribute their views to statutory reviews and are effectively supported in doing so. A high proportion of looked after children are unaccompanied

asylum seekers and from Black and minority ethnic groups and they receive support appropriately targeted to their needs. Placement stability and the rate of placements with foster and adoptive carers for children are good.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 4

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 outstanding. No recommendations emerged from the JAR.

Early years provision is good and enables children to enjoy learning and achieve very well. Standards are strong overall and attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage is high in comparison to the national and neighbourhood averages. Inspections of schools since February 2007 indicate that the Foundation Stage was judged to be at least good, and in half the schools it was judged outstanding. Overall educational standards and achievement in primary and secondary schools continue to be outstanding, with provisional results for 2007 indicating that the pattern is continuing, particularly at Key Stages 2 to 4. Contextual value added by schools is above national averages. Results for 2006 were at or above national averages at Key Stages 1 and 2, and Key Stage 3 results made the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea one of the most improved and consistently high attaining areas nationally. The proportion of young people achieving GCSEs at grades A*-C is well above national and neighbourhood averages. The proportion of young people achieving GCSEs at grades A*-G rose sharply, giving the council the fourth highest ranking nationally.

Support for school improvement is very effective resulting, for example, in the only school in a category being removed from special measures with a judgement of good overall effectiveness. Integrated multi-disciplinary targeted support has had an impressive impact; for example, in a targeted area, support for families with children in Key Stage 2 helped to bring about a significant increase in achievement in literacy and numeracy this year. Inspections since February 2007 indicate that the overall effectiveness of schools was judged to be at least good, with eight of 13 judged as outstanding. A recent inspection of the hospital school judged its learners to be receiving outstanding education and support.

Inspection judgements indicate that attendance in the primary sector has been a comparatively weaker area and authorised absence was well above the national and comparator averages in 2006. The appropriate focus by schools and the education welfare service however, is having a good impact, which is reflected in improved attendance returns of over 94% made to the Department for Children, Schools and Families for 2006/07. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is confident in being able to sustain this improvement given the positive impact of the steps already taken. Behaviour was judged as outstanding in 11 of 13 school inspections since February 2007 and the school survey indicates that the effectiveness of the council's behaviour support programme is regarded very highly by schools. The number of

permanent exclusions this year is low and services are very effective in supporting children and young people at risk of exclusion. The council continues to have a very strong focus on voluntary learning, recreation, play and sport provision, with young people in the Tellus2 survey responding positively to this provision.

Targeted intervention for vulnerable young people is excellent and can be seen, for example, in opportunities provided for play and recreation for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities during the summer. Support for the education of looked after children continues to be very good with robust systems in place for monitoring their progress. Good progress is being made in developing a 'virtual school'. A headteacher has been appointed with a specific remit to support each looked after child or young person to achieve their full educational potential. The attainment of looked after children is excellent against national comparators; for example, in 2006 the proportion of looked after children who achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-G was well above the national average. Funding is used to good effect in providing extra-curricular activities to enable looked after children to develop resilience, self-esteem and life skills. Provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also results in excellent outcomes. School inspections since February 2007 judged schools to be at least good in relation to the progress made by children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with nine of 13 schools judged as outstanding in this respect.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 4

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 excellent. No recommendations emerged from the JAR.

Summary of strengths and areas for development

Children and young people are given excellent support in a variety of settings to develop as well-rounded individuals. They make a strong contribution to decision making and supporting the community. Particularly impressive since the JAR have been the steps taken to involve and listen to the voice of vulnerable groups and the targeting of children aged 5 to 10 years. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are actively encouraged to participate in decision-making through the newly established disabled youth forum. Equally, those who are looked after are also encouraged and supported to have a strong voice in decisions which affect them. Consequently, participation rates in consultations and in their reviews are high.

Education provision from early years to post-16 contributes well to this outcome. For example, behaviour, personal development and well-being have been judged to be particularly strong in school inspections. The youth service is well resourced and reaches a high proportion of its target age range. It has recently developed its curriculum to align activities with *Every child matters* outcomes. The school survey shows excellent satisfaction with council services for this outcome, with particularly positive responses for the effectiveness of the youth service.

The reduction in levels of crime also contributes well to this outcome. Data for 2006–07 on first-time entrants into crime show no increase. This is positive bearing in mind the impact of the ‘offences brought to justice’ target for London. The council continues to perform well within the Youth Justice Board performance framework. Appropriate priority is being given to targeting habitual offenders and crime reduction in particular areas within the borough. Restorative justice is also having a positive impact on the likelihood of young people re-offending. Overall performance in relation to key performance indicators has improved throughout 2006–07. For the full year 2006–07 the youth offending team achieved a Level 4 performance, which is excellent and well above their comparators.

Achieving economic well-being

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. One recommendation emerged from the JAR.

For action in the next six months

- Strengthen services to support the economic well-being of families and young people. This should include adult and community learning, Level 2 and 3 achievement rates for young people by 19 years of age and the full implementation of the 14 to 19 strategy.

Since the JAR, very good progress has been made to strengthen the working relationships of services and their joint work in improving the economic well-being of families. This is coupled with good progress in the delivery of specific strategic and operational objectives, such as those set out in the 14 to 19 strategy.

The restructured integrated early years service is working well with partners to provide a wide range of opportunity for users to access services. A particular emphasis has been placed on supporting vulnerable users. For example, the Break 4 U group has provided a good range of opportunities for teenage mothers to develop childcare skills and accreditation, as has its partner group Break 4 U BRO which targets teenage fathers. Children's centres are developing well with five delivering the core offer and three more due in Phase 2, one of which will have a specific focus on support for families where there are children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The centres are effective hubs providing a wide range of services to support families. Positive steps have been taken in bringing together the

development of children's centres and extended services. Information, advice and guidance for young people aged 14 to 19 is progressing well, as is the more general information being provided to families about accessing services. Good progress has been made in broadening existing community-based basic skills and training as can be seen, for example, in the pre-employment into retail training, and efforts to support teenagers into work.

Since February 2007, school inspection judgements for this outcome were good or better, with eight of 13 schools judged as outstanding. Overall performance and achievement rates are good, particularly at age 16 where they are excellent. Rates at Level 2 and 3 at age 19 are close to London central and national averages. The proportion of young people in Year 11 who continue on into learning is higher than average.

Plans for the development of the new academy school are on track with its opening in temporary accommodation planned for 2009. A joint construction Diploma Gateway application with neighbouring boroughs has been successful and the council is hoping for similar success when a second application for creative media is considered in December 2007. Collaboration and partnerships are developing well. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is aware of the need to further strengthen certain elements, for example, the quality and effectiveness of the Education Business Partnership which is not yet as strong as some other aspects of its provision. The Central London Connexions Service, led by the council, continues to be effective with evidence of good outreach and impact. Particular strengths are joint working with the youth service and the systems in place to track mobile young people in the area.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has exceeded the 2010 target for the number of young people who are classified as not in education, employment or training (NEET). The number has continued to fall year-on-year. This pattern continues to be below or around the average for London Central. The number of those whose status is not known is below average. Plans are well developed for the council to continue to lead the London Central Connexions partnership, from April 2008, working with its seven partner local authorities.

Good progress is being made on reducing the number of looked after children and young offenders who are NEET. Good progress is also being made with teenage parents to enable them to remain in employment, education or training. Additional capacity has also been added to the partnership to provide more specialised support for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and are at risk of being NEET. The school survey shows excellent satisfaction with council services for this outcome, with particularly positive responses for the extent to which local community and regeneration initiatives take account of the needs of children and young people.

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

Grade 4

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is outstanding and its management of these services is excellent. One recommendation emerged from the JAR.

For action in the next six months

- Agreed plans to establish a joint commissioning business unit should be accelerated to ensure greater consistency in purchasing placements and services, to facilitate the aggregation of needs data and the collation of local intelligence on effective working.

Overall the council has demonstrated good progress in meeting the JAR recommendations, and has shown outstanding capacity to maintain and further improve its services for children and young people.

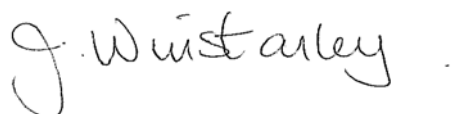
Since the JAR, the council has made very good progress in developing joint commissioning. The new directorate has been established, with a director now in post. Very good progress is being made in developing commissioning arrangements to strengthen and deliver integrated initiatives and the priorities set out in the Children and Young Person's Plan (CYPP). An example of its impact can be seen in the provision of wide-ranging recreational and play opportunities for children and young people. A comprehensive strategic partnership agreement has been made to establish a Children's Trust. Good progress has also been made in working with the voluntary sector to build capacity and enable groups to be well placed, to be commissioned, to deliver CYPP priorities from September 2008. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has maintained its strong focus on the provision of integrated services for families and it is making very good progress on developing these operationally. An example of impact is the significant reduction in numbers of looked after children following the renewed focus on support for adolescents and their families. The resultant budgetary savings are being reinvested to further develop services to prevent children needing to come into the care of the authority.

Resources continue to be used in a targeted way to good effect. The council has well informed and committed elected members who provide energy, support, constructive challenge and scrutiny of its exceptionally strong leaders. Service management benefits from stability, a strong sense of common purpose and a commitment, drive and ambition to continue building on excellence. Its impact can be seen, for example, in the school survey where council services and particularly the effectiveness of elected members is valued highly. Consultation with parents and other users influences service developments positively, for example, in shaping the plans to provide tailored holiday programmes and respite for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

A significant number of performance indicators across the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's services are improving. Partnership and integrated working at an operational level within and beyond Family and Children's Services is progressing at pace, responding with impact to the views and needs of users. At the same time performance continues to be sustained in historical areas of high standards such as in education. The council has an accurate view of its own performance and is confident but not complacent about its capacity to improve.

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 "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection