

9 December 2010

Mr Colin Peak
Director for Children and Young People
Isle of Wight Council
County Hall
High Street, Newport
Isle of Wight PO30 1UD

Dear Mr Peak

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.

Isle of Wight Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in the Isle of Wight Council perform adequately.

The large majority of local authority services and settings inspected by Ofsted are good or better and no provision is inadequate. However this positive overall picture masks considerable variation in the quality of provision across education and children's social care services. Special schools, pupil referral units, the boarding school and the children's home are all good or outstanding. Early years and childcare provision is good overall. Most primary schools are good or better and the further education college is outstanding. The weakest areas in education are the secondary schools and sixth form schools with almost two thirds judged only satisfactory and well below the national figures. The local authority's fostering and adoption services are also satisfactory, but are not as good as provision seen elsewhere.

A recent inspection of safeguarding and looked after children found that services are adequate. The local authority's capacity to make further improvements is also adequate.

Overall, performance measures show that a large majority of outcomes for children and young people are broadly average or better. However, this is not the case for the main measures of educational attainment where only half are in line with the average for similar areas and half are below. In the Reception year, the island's children do as well as other five-year-olds and, while test results for 11-year-olds are well below average, recent and notable improvement has been made. By contrast however, the below average GCSE results have changed little in three years against an improving national picture. Education outcomes for children and young people from low-income families and for those with special educational needs are worse still at all ages. The number of 19-year-olds who gain qualifications equivalent to five or more good GCSEs, or two A levels, is broadly average with improvement keeping pace with similar areas.

Key areas for further development

- Further improve safeguarding and services for looked after children in line with the recommendations of the recent inspection.
- Improve secondary schools and sixth form schools so that more are good or better.
- Improve test and examination results for 11- and 16-year-olds.
- Close the gap in attainment at all ages between the majority of children and young people and those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.

Outcomes for children and young people

The very large majority of services and settings give good support to children and young people in living healthy lives. The number of children who are seriously overweight is broadly average. Children and young people's participation in sport and physical activities has increased, but remains comparatively low. Although the number of young women under the age of 18 who get pregnant is lower than the national average, it is above the regional average and the latest data show a rising trend compared to the improving national picture. The effectiveness of services for looked after children and young people with emotional and mental health difficulties are of major concern. A comprehensive improvement plan is in place, but is at an early stage of implementation. Health outcomes for looked after children are adequate.

Services to ensure that children and young people are safe and feel safe are adequate. Safeguarding strategies policies and processes identify vulnerable groups, support and enable effective practice in most respects, and comply with statutory requirements and guidance. The different agencies involved have a good understanding of when and how to refer children who need specialist help from social care services. Children, young people and their parents and carers are routinely involved in child protection planning. Partners work together effectively to respond to the needs of children affected by domestic abuse. Key areas for improvement identified by inspectors include the timeliness of child protection reviews and improving the quality and consistency of assessments, plans and recording. Provision for looked after children is adequate overall. The local authority's children's home is good, but fostering and adoption services are only satisfactory.

The quality of education provision is too varied. The large majority of early years and childcare provision, and most primary schools, are good or better. Standards in early years' education are in line with the average for similar areas, but the progress children make in primary school is much slower. Test results for 11-year-olds are improving rapidly, but remain well below performance seen elsewhere. Too many secondary schools are only satisfactory. GCSE results have trailed well below the average for similar areas for many years, showing little change compared to the improving national picture. For children and young people from low-income families, as well as those with special educational needs, the picture is much worse at all ages, with attainment amongst the lowest for such groups in England. Support for the education of looked after children is adequate. Standards have improved with most children making satisfactory progress from their starting points. The local authority recognises the need for a step change to achieve the much needed improvements in educational outcomes for all children and young people. A comprehensive reorganisation of the island's primary, middle and secondary schools is well underway.

The very large majority of individual services and settings are good at involving children and young people in decision-making. This is a strong feature, for example, of local schools and the further education college. The Youth Council has recently been involved in interviews for senior officers within the local authority and contributed to service development, but the involvement of young people in scrutiny and strategic decision-making is insufficiently developed. The number of children and young people involved in organised leisure activities outside of school is about average. By most measures, the youth offending service works reasonably well. Re-offending by young people is above average, but reducing rapidly. However, the number of young offenders in education, training or work, as well as those who have somewhere suitable to live, is well below the average for similar areas.

Children and young people overall get good support from the very large majority of services to help them gain the skills and qualifications they need for adult life. The further education college is outstanding, but too much provision in school sixth forms is only satisfactory. The number of 19-year-olds who gain qualifications equivalent to five good GCSEs, or two A-levels, is in line with the average, with improvement keeping pace with similar areas. However the number of young people from low-income families who achieve these qualifications is significantly lower and the gap in attainment between them and the majority at this age is widening. The impact of partnership work to support and improve outcomes for care leavers is adequate. The majority of care leavers live in accommodation which meets their needs. The number in education, training or work has been well below the national average for some years, but recent inspection evidence shows a much-improved picture.

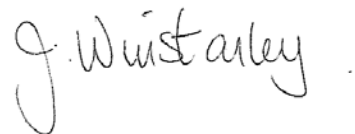
Prospects for improvement

The local authority's track record of improving outcomes for children and young people is mixed. Considerable progress has been made recently in tackling significant service pressures, particularly in children's social care. However, a history of change in the senior leadership of children's services and significant and continuing staffing vacancies in the front-line social work service mean that progress in some areas has been slow. Partnership work is adequate overall. The new Director for Children and Young People has put in place a number of robust systems and processes to improve partnership working. The workforce development strategy, although at an early stage of implementation, is pragmatic, well conceived and resourced. The local authority and its partners have recently taken action to improve safeguarding arrangements, although it is too early to judge the full impact of emerging improvement. Arrangements for performance management and quality assurance are adequate, but variable across the different agencies involved. Significant other

challenges remain, not least in completing the ambitious restructure of the island's schools at the same time as securing much needed improvement in educational outcomes.

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, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment