

26 November 2007

Mr Steve Beynon
Director of Children's Services
Isle of Wight Council
County Hall, High Street
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Dear Mr Beynon

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN ISLE OF WIGHT 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, your action plan arising from the joint area review and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. The letter comments on progress since the recent joint area review. 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 2

The Isle of Wight Council provides a service that delivers only minimum requirements for users. The council has responded positively to the recommendations raised in the 2006 joint area review and has made satisfactory progress overall. Since that time, the key appointments that have been made have increased both the council's strategic capacity and expertise; there has been renewed impetus to challenge the status quo in the council's strive for improvement. As a result, outcomes for enjoying and achieving have improved as seen in the attainment of children and young people in Key Stage 3 and the council's contribution to this aspect is now adequate. The contribution the council makes towards improving outcomes for being healthy, staying safe and for economic well-being remain adequate, although there is clear evidence that the council's vision for a 'one island learning community' has impacted positively on the 14 to 19 agenda. The contribution the council makes towards improving outcomes for positive contribution remains good. Overall, the council has taken adequate steps to improve integrated working in the children's services and there is a clear and satisfactory commitment to improving further all services for children and young people.

Being healthy

Grade 2

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Three recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For action over the next six months

- The Children and Young People's Strategic Trust Board should develop a strategy and a delivery plan to ensure that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) meet the needs of children and young people.

For action in the longer term

- The Director of Public Health should ensure that sexually transmitted infection rates for under-16s and those aged 16–19 years are monitored and that the delivery of sexual health programmes is evaluated in response.
- The Director of Public Health should continue to ensure, through rigorous performance management, that childhood immunisation rates at both two years and five years are improved.

The services provided by the authority are making good progress towards having a comprehensive CAMHS. The strategy has been developed and measures are in place to identify improved performance. Robust action is being taken to improve recognition of early signs of mental ill health and thereby to reduce the level of referrals to specialist services; two additional primary care mental health workers have been appointed to the school nursing team as part of this strategy. Sexual health services have been reconfigured resulting in improved access and increased use of services. A Chlamydia screening co-ordinator has been appointed and a programme of screening for 15- to 24-year-olds has commenced. Data from this programme will be used to target further intervention. Immunisation levels by the second birthday have increased over the last two years but are still below the national average, and by the fifth birthday the gap is wider still. Additional resources have been released to appoint a health visitor to work with GP practices and to target vulnerable families, and families are being called in well before the fifth birthday for pre-school immunisations.

Services are working together to improve healthy lifestyles for children and young people. Breast-feeding rates are above the national average and are increasing, and smoking in pregnancy is reducing although it is still relatively high. All GPs provide child health surveillance and a Saturday club for children scheduled for surgery has been very successful in reducing the length of stay and the amount of pain relief required. All schools are engaged in the National Healthy Schools Programme and progress is on target. In the Tellus2 survey, a higher than average number of children and young people said that they received good enough information on healthy eating. Ofsted school inspections found that all schools inspected were at least satisfactory in enabling learners to be healthy and there were a significant

proportion of good and outstanding grades in primary, secondary and special schools. Most early years provision contributes well to the health of young children through good teaching and practical arrangements. At inspection 14.4% of settings attained an outcome judgement of outstanding which is significantly higher than the national average, and no settings were found to be inadequate. Health checks for looked after children and young people are at a good level, but performance has reduced in the last twelve months. Services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been successfully developed to enable families to receive outreach support at home, and one special school has reconfigured the provision of therapy to enable increased access for parents and a more integrated service to children and young people.

The rate of teenage conceptions has recently increased although it is still below the 1998 baseline. Services are working closely together to improve education on sexual health, and data are being analysed effectively to target times of high incidence such as music festivals. Admissions to hospital of under-20-year-olds with mental and behavioural disorders due to substance misuse are exceptionally high. Figures have been analysed and action is being taken on a number of fronts, for example by providing a substance misuse worker in the hospital accident and emergency department and increasing support for specialist CAMHS services. In the Tellus2 survey about one third of young people said that they would like better information on alcohol, smoking, drugs, sex and relationships.

Areas for development

- Reduce the number of referrals to specialist CAMH services through increased early identification and training.
- Improve the take-up of immunisations.
- Reduce the number of teenage conceptions.
- Address the high level of admissions to hospital due to alcohol misuse and increase the availability of information to young people.

Staying safe

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. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For action over the next six months

- The Children and Young People's Strategic Trust Board, in conjunction with the council, should develop and implement a comprehensive preventive strategy.

A comprehensive preventive strategy is being developed, which addresses all of the outcome areas for children and young people. Existing services have been audited and plans are in place to increase support through early intervention, combined with better information and workforce development. The strategy links to indicators already identified as part of the Local Area Agreement, and will be incorporated into the Children and Young People's Plan.

Road deaths of children and young people are decreasing and progress is just above the national average. In the Tellus2 survey, 84% of young people said they felt safe or very safe around the area, 88% said they felt safe going to and from school, but only 82% felt safe in school. All children and young people on the Child Protection Register have an allocated social worker and all of their reviews were carried out on time. Re-registrations are low and no child has been on the register for more than two years, indicating that intervention is timely. However, the number of initial child protection conferences is high, although reducing, and the number of children and young people who became the subject of a child protection plan or were registered has dropped from a very high figure in 2005/06 and is now slightly above the national average. School inspections found that all schools inspected were at least adequate in ensuring that learners stay safe, and there were slightly more good or outstanding schools than average. In early years' provision, all settings were at least satisfactory and 19% were outstanding, which is much higher than the national average. Most care leavers have pathway plans and a personal adviser, and over 90% of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a transition plan, which represents continued good performance.

Referrals appear to be at a relatively low level, although referrals to some services are not included in the figures. Initial assessments are also low but core assessments are high. The council is addressing the issues raised by these figures in terms of thresholds and the approach to practice. The timeliness of assessments is at least as good as national averages, and in the case of initial assessments, much better.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board has good representation from local agencies and good attendance. Learning is disseminated from case reviews, and practices within agencies have changed as a result. A lot of time is being invested in safeguarding training in schools, one result of which has been an increase in the number of child protection referrals.

The council has a very high number of looked after children and young people, and this has increased in the last year. The council has identified that there are high numbers living at home on care orders, or placed with family and friends, and these cases have been prioritised for consideration. Placement stability is good and better than the national average. Performance on reviews has improved and is now at an acceptable level. However, adoptions of looked after children and young people fell to a very low level in 2006/07. Inspections of the local authority fostering and private fostering services in 2006 found that the services were well managed.

Areas for development

- Develop a consistent approach with regard to thresholds and practice in the referral and assessment process.
- Review the referrals for initial child protection conferences to assess where preventative work can be targeted most effectively.
- Review the thresholds for children and young people becoming looked after and ensure that the cases of these children and young people are regularly reviewed to consider whether statutory intervention is still necessary.
- Increase the adoption rate of looked after children.

Enjoying and achieving

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. Four recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For immediate action

- Agreeing and implementing a school improvement strategy with schools.
- Developing and implementing an access and inclusion strategy.
- Developing a monitoring and evaluation procedure for the Key Stage 3 initiative that will impact on standards immediately.

For action in the next six months

- The council should review procedures for the reintegration of pupils out of school to ensure earlier reintegration and effective support on entry to high schools.

A full consultation with headteachers, professional associations and governing bodies has taken place following which a detailed protocol document was produced to support the school improvement strategy. Further improvements are to be made and a revised school improvement strategy is currently out for consultation.

Strengths include the Foundation Stage; inspections consistently judge provision to be good or better in both quality and standards. Standards at Key Stage 1 show improvement and are well above the national trend. Focussed support to raise attainment in English at Key Stage 2 produced broadly average standards in 2006 that are improving at above the national trend. Mathematics is now receiving similar scrutiny as standards are broadly average and trends are rising in line with the national picture. Standards in science at Key Stage 2 were above average in 2006.

Significant work has taken place to develop a monitoring and evaluation procedure for the Key Stage 3 initiative to impact on standards immediately. Although standards were below average in 2006, Key Stage 3 value added data between 2004 and 2006 showed a steady increase. The council reports a 30% improvement in the number of looked after children and young people who achieved Level 5 in English, mathematics and science in 2006. The improvement made in English in 2006 matched the national trend. Whilst this was not the case in mathematics and science, provisional results for 2007 show real improvement. With an increase of 10% in English, 11% in mathematics and 8% in science, the 2006 national average is set to be exceeded in all subjects. The key to this improvement has been the authority's engagement and partnership with schools in their quest for accelerated progress. Support, challenge and intervention have reflected the council's sharp focus on learning.

GCSE results in 2006 were below the national average. Even so, the proportion of young people who were looked after or care leavers and attained one GCSE A*–G was good. At five A*–C the percentage change in results from 2005 for all young people, whilst in line with the national average, was above that of similar councils. At five A*–C, including English and mathematics, the percentage change from 2005 was above both comparable councils and the national average. Significantly, the provisional GCSE results for 2007 show a larger percentage increase than that of the previous year in both respects. However, the council knows that standards are still not high enough. Partnership with others to engage, support and challenge schools in need of high or medium support is ongoing. The full impact of this work is yet to be seen; even so, the local authority no longer has a school in an Ofsted category of concern.

Good progress has been made in developing extended schools and services and the authority has received national recognition for excellence for the Extended Full Service school pilot. The council's work to develop and implement an access and inclusion strategy is underway. Plans to restructure council support services into a more coherent structure are being developed. However, the council's concentration on raising standards has meant that a reduced focus has been given to this work. The management of special educational needs has been identified for improvement. To effectively support pupils' entry to high schools, projects are being devised to identify children and young people at risk of exclusion and to support them better from middle to upper schools. An example of this is the Active8s summer programme of activities provided by youth workers to maintain motivation and engagement.

Significant developments in data and their analysis are aiding intervention and the better monitoring of achievement and progress of all groups of pupils. The work of the Looked After Children's Education Service (LACES) team is contributing effectively to this development. Improved multi-agency working reflects the drive of senior officers in the council to 'get it right' for the most vulnerable young people. For example, the percentage of statements of special educational needs prepared within 18 weeks is good. Also, alternative tuition provided for pupils following exclusion, at 20 hours or more per week, is in the best quartile nationally and improving.

The improved collection of data has also been applied to attendance; greater rigour is now expected from schools. In 2006, attendance was in line with the national average in both primary and secondary schools representing an improvement on the previous year. This is supported by inspection evidence which shows that the vast majority of pupils enjoy their time at school. However, the percentage of school age children and young people who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months and who missed at least 25 days of schooling has increased and is still above the national average.

Areas for development

- Raise standards further, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Improve the management of special educational needs.
- Improve the attendance at school of looked after children and young people.

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. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For immediate action

- The council should analyse reported incidents of racism and provide feedback to schools on the nature of incidents and resulting action to assist them with prevention.

An officer has been appointed to the Corporate Diversity and Equalities Division with responsibility for work with schools; this has been made to improve feedback about racist incidents and support schools dealing with them. Individual reports to schools on specific incidents are provided whilst feedback to children and young people is given through the Youth Council and 'Right to be heard' youth meeting. The Equality and Diversity Monitoring Group provide a cross agency forum to support action.

Children and young people have a good range of opportunities through which their voice can be heard. Consultation is a strength of the council's work. For example, the voice of looked after children and young people is represented on the corporate parenting panel, on staff interviews and on policy development through focus groups. In 2006/07, 96% of looked after children and young people communicated their views for each of their statutory reviews. This outcome is slightly above that of the previous year and is very good when compared with comparative councils in England. The Participation Reference group provides the facility for consulting with all children and young people; this in turn informs the development of the island's participation strategy.

A range of initiatives has begun to increase participation. During the current year, the number of co-opted places on the Youth Council has been increased. Young people have played a significant part in the planning of the 'Big Day Out Young People's Festival' plus other young people's events. Working with 'Connexions', the Children's Services have started 'Total Respect Training' where Youth People trainers train adults in 'respect'; a range of personnel at senior levels have already been involved. These actions impact positively on participation. Results of the Tellus2 survey, however, show that young people's contribution to their community is below that seen nationally. The council is working with the voluntary and community sector to improve this aspect of their work.

The Youth Service reaches a much higher percentage of young people than comparative councils or nationally, and continues to provide good support for the young people on the island. Positive outcomes have been achieved, for example, through targeted outreach services to areas where anti-social behaviour has been reported. Young people have also been consulted about their views on what services would have helped prevent them from offending. The number of looked after children and young people who are subject to a reprimand, final warning or conviction has been reduced, but the percentage is still above the national average. Through personalised intervention programmes, it is planned that further improvements will be made. The Early Intervention Service demonstrates the council's integrated approach to 'prevention'. The council reports the positive impact of this approach through the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system which has fallen recently by 15%.

Area for development

- Further develop children and young people's participation and contribution to the community.

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. Three recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For action in the next six months

- The council should complete the implementation of the 14–19 strategy and learner entitlement in conjunction with stakeholders.

For action in the longer term

- The council, in conjunction with the Isle of Wight College and the Learning and Skills Council, should review the curriculum offer to ensure an appropriate balance of academic and vocational provision post-16.

- The council and its partners should increase the range of suitable accommodation for families, young people and those who may require semi-independent or supported housing.

The council has responded positively to the issues raised in the joint area review. A noted feature of its improvement is that of collaboration and the creation of a 14–19 consortium. Positive relationships are being established between institutions, and providers are focussing on problem-solving rather than structure. As a result, institutions are timetabling for flexibility and this has had a big impact on take up and the number of young people now involved. It is through the pathfinder and other learning centres that facilities will be developed to provide the breadth of a high quality curriculum. The diploma in Creative and Media Arts will commence in September 2009. Four other diploma bids have yet to be submitted. They are, however, linked to local sector skills, to support progression to higher education and jobs on the island. The need to ensure that 14–19 advice and guidance reflects the developing education and training opportunities for young people is evident.

The number of young people who are not in employment, education and training is low compared to the rest of England. However, it is rising but initiatives to better engage and support children and young people are in place. A school engagement programme has been planned; this will support 100 young people, 25% being children and young people in care or who are at risk of becoming disengaged. Alongside this will run a project to support the engagement and progression in learning of older teenage parents, which is funded through the Learning and Skills Council. Another area identified for improvement is the training offered to foster carers so they can support young people in their aspirations for the future. As with all such projects, the full impact is yet to be seen. Even so, the proportion of young people at Year 11 who continue in learning is an improving picture with above national outcomes in 2006/07.

The Youth Offending Team links closely with Connexions to help young people through positive activities on the island. This collaboration also helps 16- to 18-year-olds who have previously offended, to find employment, apprenticeship or obtain a place at college. The engagement of care leavers and other vulnerable groups in employment, education and training at the age of 19 years is effective. In 2006/07, the outcome was very good compared with the rest of the country. The percentage of young people achieving Level 2 by the time they reach age 19 is also above the national average. The outstanding contribution made by the Isle of Wight College to the achievement and economic well-being of its young people is clear. The success and achievement rates at the college on its full time courses are well above national in both respects. However, the council knows there is more to do to raise the quality of teaching and learning on Level 3 courses in its schools with sixth forms. This is because the percentage of young people achieving Level 3 by age 19 in these schools, whilst increasing at above the national trend, remains below the national average.

The council reports that significant progress has been made in developing more varied housing provision for families, young people and those who may require semi-

independent provision or supported housing. The three housing associations have recognised responsibilities for providing housing and preventing homelessness. Provision for semi-independence has been extended.

Areas for development

- Develop relevant and high quality specialist diplomas building on the success of one diploma in the first round.
- Fully align 14–19 advice and guidance to reflect the rapidly developing education and training opportunities for all young people.
- Continue to improve Level 3 provision and the achievement of young people on these courses in schools.

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

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is adequate, and its management of these services is adequate. Three recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For immediate action

- The council should improve the quality of performance management by further strengthening service planning and individual appraisal processes.
- The council should strengthen project and programme management including the coordination and planning of projects within children's services.

For action over the next six months

- The Children and Young People's Strategic Trust should seek to integrate the management information systems of all partners.

A detailed action plan was drawn up following the joint area review in 2006. Measurable success criteria have been identified, although it is not always clear when some actions are due for completion, and the name of the lead officer accountable for implementation is not always included. There has been a complete review of performance management processes and a new strategy is in place, which now needs to become embedded in practice. Planning, reporting and analysis are becoming more tightly linked to outcomes, and elected members are more closely involved. There has been an improvement in the accuracy and management of data and more robust data are enabling targeted planning across agencies. Project management is now better coordinated and each project is regularly reviewed. This has resulted in better budget scrutiny and projects are becoming more focused.

There is now increased corporate oversight and greater knowledge sharing across the council, which is developing management capacity.

The council and its partners have a vision of what they want to achieve for children and young people and this is set out in the Children and Young People's Plan. The review of the plan provides a realistic assessment of progress so far and of what is still to be done. Capacity has been enhanced significantly through new senior appointments and investment in school improvement. Partnership work is developing and a safeguarding consultant, funded jointly by children's services and health, is improving the quality and consistency of safeguarding training and decisions.

Performance in education is showing noticeable signs of improvement, particularly at Key Stage 3. Some social care costs are relatively high, and these are being reviewed as part of service restructuring. Despite significant and ongoing cultural change, there has been a reduction in vacancy levels and in the number of social care staff who have left the council, although this is still higher than the national average.

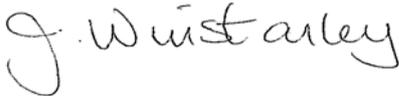
Areas for development

- Continue to make progress on the recommendations of the joint area review.
- Reduce social care costs through improved efficiency.
- Increase staff retention rates in social care.

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

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 blue ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection