

26 November 2007

Mr Andrew Ireland
Group Director for Children & Young People
London Borough of Havering
Town Hall
Main Road
Romford
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Dear Mr Ireland

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING

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 (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

Havering Borough Council consistently delivers above minimum requirements. The council has responded extremely positively and speedily to the recommendations raised in the JAR report and has made significant progress since that time. At the time of the JAR the council's contribution to all *Every child matters* outcomes were judged to be at least good. The education service remains outstanding, making an excellent contribution to helping children and young people enjoy and achieve.

Since the JAR there have been effective actions under each outcome. Through these actions, the council has demonstrated that its capacity to improve is now outstanding. All other judgements remain unchanged because innovations have been implemented too recently to yet see their impact on the outcomes. For example, over the last year the council's 14–19 strategy has been transformed. All secondary schools have increased their range of provision, but while effective structures are in place to co-ordinate this, the impact is only beginning to be seen.

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 with some outstanding features. The JAR in 2006 judged this area to be good and three recommendations emerged:

For immediate action

- The Primary Care Trust (PCT) should appoint a designated nurse and doctor for looked after children and young people.

For action in the next six months

- Improve information, guidance and support to address alcohol misuse and under age drinking by children and young people.

For action over the longer term

- Establish a database of health outcomes; use this to identify local variations in health and to evaluate the impact of health improvement initiatives.

Good progress has been made on all the recommendations although the database of health outcomes will take longer to develop. A designated doctor and nurse have been appointed for looked after children, to start work immediately for those living in the area, and this aspect of service is now adequate. A protocol is being developed to ensure health monitoring for those that live outside the borough. The proportion of looked after children and young people having health and dental checks is rising and, at 94%, is very good in comparison to 84% nationally and 75% in comparable boroughs.

Since the JAR there have been increased benefits for children and young people's health from reorganisation within the PCT. There is a greater emphasis on children and young people's health priorities in the revised PCT commissioning strategy, particularly obesity, substance misuse and smoking cessation. Since the JAR the drug and alcohol team has led vigorous multi agency work to tackle under age drinking. Information is now available to young people and workers across a range of agencies. Trading standards and licensing teams, park wardens and the police are involved in innovative schemes to cut out the supply of alcohol to young people and a drop in incidence has been recorded in targeted areas. Youth services and the youth offending team are involved in supporting young people affected by alcohol misuse, making specialist counselling readily available. Substance misuse admissions to hospital are significantly low compared to the national average.

The good progress made towards a comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAHMS) has been sustained. Services are ranked eighth out of 33 London boroughs by the Quality Improvement Network CAMHS. The area undertook their own review in 2006; as a result the range of provision for non-specialist services has increased and services such as Relateen give children and young people easier routes to seek help for mental health and wellbeing issues through schools and other settings. Waiting times for specialist services are good compared with the national averages although for non-specialist services they are longer. Consultation with voluntary groups underpins preventative strategies, particularly to support Black and minority ethnic groups, although much is at a new stage of development. The appointment of a specialist clinician for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been well received.

There is outstanding commitment from agencies to promote a healthy lifestyle, evident in some very good outcomes. The number of teenage pregnancies in the area is falling and rates of conception among 15 to 17 year-olds has remained much lower than that found in comparable areas, and nationally, over the last four years. Parents, including young parents, get very good support to keep their children healthy. Immunisation rates are high, health checks by GPs and hospital services are accessible. The rates of tooth decay are low. Prevention of obesity is a high priority. Health and children's services are collaborating effectively to identify vulnerable groups and to fund projects over the long term. There is very good progress towards Healthy Schools status, 58% of targeted local schools having achieved the status by July 2007 compared with 47% nationally. Very good progress is being made towards the ambitious local area agreement targets, set at 81% of all schools, including all special schools, to have achieved accreditation by December 2009. There is very good support for healthy eating in the borough. Three quarters of schools are meeting the target for the minimum two hours of physical activity per week for each child or young person including those in special schools and with physical disabilities.

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. Three recommendations for action were highlighted in the JAR report:

For action in the next six months

- Develop a borough-wide strategy and improve provision to combat bullying of children and young people within the community.
- Improve information and access to family support services, including respite care services, for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- Improve information processes to identify and track, at an early stage, children and young people who move into the borough and those who are out of mainstream education.

Good progress has been made on the recommendations. There has been a much improved focus on the safeguarding aspects of identifying and tracking children and young people. Existing fair admissions to schools procedures and homeless family criteria have been strengthened to ensure accurate information is gathered. All local services including schools, health visitors, Traveller education services and Connexions collaborate fully to track and take action promptly when any child or young person goes missing. This work is being developed beyond the immediate statutory requirements through protocols with other councils across London and in neighbouring Essex.

The Havering Safeguarding Children's Board is well established with a purposeful business plan and adequate resources. There is good emphasis on providing information and accessible training. A recent campaign through all schools and youth settings publicised safe use of the internet to children and their parents or carers. Inspection findings indicate that youth centres, schools and early years settings provide good, safe environments and safe practices. Road accident levels involving children and young people are dropping at a faster rate than nationally. A comprehensive range of anti-bullying strategies are now in place, embedded in behaviour strategies, race-relations monitoring, youth work on hate crimes and the activities of schools councils. Resources for peer education initiatives have been secured from the Jack Pechey Trust although it is too early to see the impact.

A broad range of preventative and family services are clearly targeted across all areas of local need through six locality partnerships. Multi-agency referral panels promote early intervention and support for children. Since the JAR, rigorous monitoring across the borough has ensured access to improved information and referral, particularly for those with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities. The rates of referral and re-referral for assessment are low and the proportion of children on the child protection register or those subject to child protection plans has dropped to very low levels in comparison with other areas and the national average. There has been good uptake of well planned family support by Black and minority ethnic groups although it is too early to see significant impact, from this work, in reducing the over-representation of these groups requiring child protection plans or coming into care. This aspect is recognised as an area for further development by the council.

Children's services have managed processes vigorously to improve the proportion of initial assessments carried out within the nationally recommended timescales. These now stand at 55.5%, well below the 64.7% average in comparable areas and the national average of 68.4% in 2006–07. Local data show performance has now improved to levels found in comparable areas last year, although as yet there is no data to compare this improvement with current performance nationally. The comparatively high numbers of initial assessments going forward for further assessment are dealt with promptly, 78% within the 35 day timescale, in line with

the national average. All cases with child protection plans in place are allocated to qualified social workers and were reviewed on time; with good numbers deregistered or having their care plans ended after a short spell of intervention, in the last year. Over 90% of young people with physical difficulties have transition plans in place to move on to adult services, a very good level, which is achieved by 63% of authorities nationally.

There has been continued good progress on providing safe and stable placements for looked after children and young people. Performance on stability of placements is banded as very good in national terms, with 11% of those counted having three or more placements and 82% meeting the two year long term criterion. This compares with less than 66% in statistical neighbour council areas and nationally. Satisfactory numbers, some 82% of reviews, were held on time in the year up to March 2007 compared with 84% nationally, although concentrated effort has resulted in improved completion times since April 2007. Innovative work is being developed with near-neighbour councils to increase recruitment of foster carers for children and young people of dual heritage to meet the changing needs of groups among looked after children. Commissioned services from voluntary sector partners Lilliputs and Barnardo's and good capacity building among in-house foster carers have improved access to respite care for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities.

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. The positive work identified at the time of the JAR has been maintained and improved further. The JAR found no areas for action. At age 16 young people attain GCSE results that are above the national average. Children and young people overall make above average progress in secondary schools. Those who continue to Level 3 qualifications such as GCE A level do very well and attain well above the national average.

Ofsted inspections found provision in all of the borough's schools that were inspected to be at least satisfactory and many to be good or better, in the period under review. Inspectors were given detailed analysis to show how the council monitors and identifies underperformance. Whilst attainment is high, the average progress of children and young people across the borough, as measured by contextual value added, is average between each key stage and a little above average for Key Stages 2 to 4. The council has been focusing its resources on schools where progress needed to improve. It provided a rigorous and convincing account showing very significant improvement, as a result of council intervention and support, to challenge potential underachievement. These actions have resulted in a marked increase in national test scores in several schools.

There has been intensive support for schools to improve attendance. There is a policy of early intervention and an understanding of the importance of attendance is inculcated from the Foundation Stage. The impact of these actions can be seen in the improved attendance over the last year which is now above the national average.

The council supports and works in partnership with its schools very well. There are many opportunities to meet its headteachers. They are updated with national developments, for example the recent two day headteachers' conference focusing on 'personalisation'. The council maintains a facilitating role in sharing good practice regarding the writing of school self evaluation forms and sharing the lessons learned from Ofsted inspections. The aspect that makes this council outstanding is the strong ethos of team working amongst school leaders who take responsibility for and lead several areas of the council's work, for example secondary headteachers are leading the council's development work for the new diplomas.

Looked after children and young people attain above national levels. Their school attendance is closely monitored and support for individual children or young people is ensuring they make good progress. They are very well supported at critical moments such as primary to secondary transfer ensuring that they are guided in the choices made. Eight care leavers are moving to university this year. The council takes its parenting role very seriously and arranges opportunities for looked after children and young people that are wider than academic achieving through activities such as sport. Looked after children and young people are increasingly placed with the borough but opportunities for children and young people placed externally are monitored closely by the council. The council is committed to a policy of inclusion and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for, whether in mainstream or special schools. As a result they achieve well. The provision for excluded children is improving as the much improved 14–19 strategy offers a wider choice of vocational and work based provision.

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. The JAR highlighted two areas for immediate action in the next six months.

For action in the next six months

- The council and its partners should ensure that young carers are identified and effectively supported.
- Improve the participation of children and young people in the planning, design and evaluation of services and decision making processes and in particular, improve the participation of looked after children and children and young people in child protection conferences.

Schools, early years, youth and care settings and council services provide well for social, emotional and personal development, with good outcomes for most children and young people. Following the JAR the council worked effectively with the voluntary organisation Young Minds to raise awareness and identify more than 120 young carers in schools and youth settings. The national organisation Barnardo's has been commissioned to develop activities with young carers and build a sustainable programme to help raise their achievement from April 2008.

The range of opportunities for children and young people to contribute to their schools and communities is excellent. All schools have school councils. There are good structures in place to support volunteering, peer tuition and peer mentoring in key outcome areas. Those involved in peer mentoring on acceptable behaviour, gain accreditation for their involvement. Peer tuition on teenage pregnancy issues takes an innovative drama-based approach and actively includes young people with disabilities.

The work of the youth offending team, the police and other agencies to combat anti-social behaviour, bullying and offending is good. Young people have been widely engaged to help on this theme. Selected young people help agencies detect suppliers of alcohol to underage drinkers and have contributed to publicity materials as part of a wider Respect programme. Good numbers of young people worked with the Drug and Alcohol Team in safety awareness events using the Connexions truck in different areas of the borough. The range of diversionary activities is good and young people who do offend are given good support. The rate of all young people re-offending in the area, including a very small number of looked after children for whom wider comparisons are not statistically valid, is falling faster than in comparable areas and England and Wales overall.

Consultation with children and young people is a routine aspect of planning and evaluating in many service areas. Children and young people's views have been effective in improving access to CAMHS. Looked after children and care leavers are influential in their involvement with the Corporate Parenting Panel, with good impact on the council's action to secure accommodation for care leavers. Children and Young people have been consulted on the development of Romford town centre. In response to the JAR, participation plans have been strengthened to become more systematic although there are few measurable outcomes by this date. Work is still in progress towards an action plan to increase the participation of children and young people in the Children's Trust by April 2008.

Arrangements to involve looked after children and young people in their care reviews, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are good, enabling an acceptable 83% to participate to some extent in reviews, compared with 87% nationally. An ambitious target is in place to increase the participation of children and young people in their child protection conferences to 98% by 2008. Borough wide consultation and participation plans ensure that views from children and young people in these groups are included.

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. Two recommendations for action were highlighted in the JAR report.

For action in the next six months

- Strengthen the 14–19 strategy to ensure that all young people have consistent access to a wider range of education, employment and training options and provision.

For action in the longer term

- The council and its partners should challenge the culture of young people entering employment without training and increase the attainment of Level 2 qualifications between the ages of 16–19.

Excellent progress has been made in developing the 14–19 agenda. The council now co-ordinates partnership working across the borough, which involves employers and key parts of the council. In addition to driving plans forward, this is resulting in the very practical increase in the availability of apprentices. A key element in Havering's strategy is that 14–19 courses should be appropriate for, and available to, the whole ability range. Elected members have formed a topic group to focus on 14–19 provision. Council advisory staff have been training lecturers in the local further education college on teaching and learning for pre-16 students. Since the JAR, human resources have been strengthened to support this developing area and a greater sense of urgency is evident. The council is working increasingly with neighbouring boroughs to improve the quality of 14–19 education and training. The impact of these initiatives is beginning to be seen in record high results above the national average at age 16. However, as these courses last two years the full impact is yet to be seen.

Good work has been done on improving Level 2 qualifications for young people who choose to remain in education after the age of 16. However, the need to challenge the culture of young people entering employment to raise their skills level identified in the JAR still exists. The council is working hard with employers and third sector partners to enhance the availability of work based learning. Engagement of young people in education, employment or training is good, with the number of young people who are not engaged better than the national average and improving. The quality of education and training between the ages of 14 and 19 is good overall. The Aim Higher project has increased the number of young people starting university. The percentage of young people who have a Level 2 qualification at the age of 16 is significantly above the national average.

There is a good range of initiatives to raise aspirations and successfully re-engage disaffected or vulnerable young people in education or training, including young people seeking asylum. Good work is done in partnership between Connexions, the youth service and the youth offending service to maintain a good proportion of young offenders in education, employment or training. The range of post-16 education is good. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can experience work through good sheltered employment opportunities.

The council has worked hard to support child care and there is now an appropriate level of places to provide choice for families. The council has undertaken extensive primary research and identified a need to support parents where children do not attend pre-school education. It has established a programme to raise awareness of the pre-school curriculum.

Parents and families receive good support to maximise their economic well-being. The good range of childcare is publicised well. Parents receive detailed information about the range of benefits which are available to them. Job Centre Plus staff work very effectively along side Sure Start staff to assist parents with job applications and advise on employment issues. Young people get clear information about sources of finance to support their education and training. Schools do not charge more vulnerable families for activities related to the school curriculum and leisure centres are subsidised for children whose parents are claiming benefit.

The council's regeneration strategy is starting to benefit families and young people. Local residents contribute to the development of the council's community strategy. Projects are planned to target the neediest areas.

Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very good help to determine their options when they leave school. Almost all have good multi-agency transition plans outlining their individual needs and aspirations. Provision for young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities at the age of 16 is very good. Links between the colleges and the special schools are very good in preparing young people for college. Colleges have good specialist provision and the transition from school to college is well managed. In addition there are sheltered employment opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which are effective in enabling them to experience and understand working life.

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. No specific priorities for improvement were identified in the management of services in the JAR report beyond those already covered under previous headings.

At the time of the JAR, inspectors found service management to be good. There was a strong record of improvement, and performance is being sustained and improved from that level which already compared well with national comparators. Service developments already reflected national priorities and were improving access and were making a positive impact on outcomes. There are now innovative models of service developed in consultation with children and young people such as the town centre consultation. Leadership is strong and effective. The vision is ambitious and priorities are clear covering a generational time span. During the on-site visit to the council the strength of comprehensive and resourced multi-agency working was palpable. Joint commissioning is another real strength with use of the third sector leading to efficiency gains. The children's trust has a strong foundation to build on, in terms of partnership working and performance.

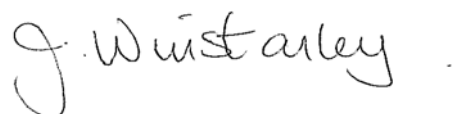
The Director of Children's Services, Lead Members and service heads provide strong leadership, and an effective scrutiny function is in place. There is a strong culture of performance management and achieving value for money, together with good professional values and standards. Difficult decisions are taken by elected members and officers when necessary. Clear and challenging ambitions have been focused on the needs of children and young people.

Since the JAR was carried out there has been focused and rapid improvement in the issues identified as areas for improvement and those that were not. For example, there has been progress in science which has been an area of relative underperformance. To support this improvement teachers at Key Stages 3 and 4 have benefited from some of the cross phase work with the post-16 sector as part of the re-energised 14–19 strategy. A further innovation is a joint funded science project to raise standards with two other neighbouring boroughs.

Although the budget for social services per capita is below the national average, the council works efficiently to achieve the good outcomes reported. It manages this through extensive and well developed commissioning drawing on private and voluntary sector expertise, to meet the diverse needs of its residents. Inspectors reviewed progress on all key issues reported in the JAR and held discussions with key officers and heads of service. The outcomes of this review and these meetings confirmed the council's self-evaluation-view that its capacity to improve further is excellent.

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